of the literature, an overview of the proposed methodology, the data-collection process, method of analysis, and perhaps a proposed timeline. At the end of this chapter, there are some suggested readings regarding the proposal writing process.

Other Related Points

There are a few other points to make about the research question(s) in grounded theory studies. A grounded theory study need not be confined to individuals. The investigation can be focused on families, organizations, industries, and other fruitful lines of endeavor. Here is an example taken from the literature of questions pertaining to an interactional and organizational study. Shuval and Mizrahi (2004), in their study of boundaries of institutional structures, the dynamics of configuration, and the nature of permeability, asked the following questions:

> *How do organizational and cognitive boundaries relate to each other? Why do biomedical practitioners allow the invasion of competitors? How do alternative practitioners "fit" into the social and geographic space of clinic and hospital structures? What mechanisms or rituals of acceptance or rejection are visible in practice settings? (p. 680)*

In their biographical study of three generational families, Rosenthal and Völter (1998) asked the following questions:

> *How do three generations of families live today with the family and collective past during the Nazi period? What influences does this past of the first generation, and their own ways of dealing with it, have upon the lives of their offspring and on the ways in which the latter come to terms with their family history? (p. 297)*

Data Collection

There can be no research without data. This section will cover the following topics related to data collection:

- A research journal
- Sources of data
- Interviews
- Observations

A Research Journal

At the inception of a research project, it is important for a researcher to initiate a research journal or diary in which he or she keeps a record of all the activities present and future that transpire during the research process. This includes appointments, summaries of discussions, proposal writing, problems, dates, important information regarding committees

and review boards, and decisions made over the course of the research as well as why each was kept. This is separate from memos discussed in Chapter 6. The value of the research journal is that it enables a researcher to become more self-aware not only of his or her biases and assumptions but also of the reason for making certain decisions and to obtain insight into his or her own behavior. An interesting aspect of doing research is that we've discovered how much we are influenced by the research process as well as the degree to which we influence the outcomes. Listening skills and sensitivity to other persons have grown as a result of interviewing persons and listening to their stories. Keeping a diary or journals enables the researcher to see the research process evolve and to note changes in self that might occur as the research progresses.

There should be a few words written in the diary or journal after each data-collection session; otherwise, important information may be forgotten. The researcher should jot down a notation of any problems that might have occurred and how these were handled. The diary or journal should include notes regarding researcher reaction during data collection as well as reactions of participants—especially if sensitive topics are discussed. More will be said about the journal under the heading of "Perspectives, Biases, and Assumptions" later in this chapter.

Sources of Data

One of the virtues of grounded theory studies and qualitative research in general is that there are many different sources of data. These include but are not limited to interviews, observations, videos, documents, drawings, diaries, group meetings, memoirs, newspapers, historical documents, and biographies. In any study, depending upon the problem to be investigated, a researcher can use one or several of these sources alone or in combination. Also, a researcher may combine interview with observation, then perhaps add documents or videos to interviews. Since the focus of this book is on analysis, we'll not go into detail about the numerous methods of data collection. Instead, we confine our discussion to a few major points. We'll focus on interview and observation because these are the most popular modes of data gathering in grounded theory and other forms of qualitative research. Beginning with Chapter 12, we will demonstrate how memoirs can become sources of data.

Though many factors contribute to the quality of analysis, one of the most important factors is the quality of the materials being analyzed. Persons sometimes think that they can go out into the field and conduct interviews or observations with no training or preparation. Often these persons are disappointed when the data they are able to gather are sparse. Interviewing and observing are skills that take training and practice to acquire.

Interviews

There are basically three types of interviews. There are unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and structured interviews. All are used in qualitative research, though some are better than others for grounded theory purposes.

Unstructured Interviews

Our experience has demonstrated that unstructured interviews—those not conducted according to a prestructured interview guide (Corbin & Morse, 2003)—provide the richest source of data for theory building. Participants are able to talk more freely about those issues and problems pertinent to them. Unstructured interviews give participants more control over the course of the interview. Participants are able to determine what subject to talk about, at what pace, in what order, and to what depth. In addition, unstructured interviews provide researchers with the ability to follow up during subsequent interviews, with the same or a different participant, on concepts found to be relevant to the evolving theory and in need of further elaboration.

Doing unstructured interviews is not easy. It takes practice to listen with an open mind and an open agenda and not let nervousness or embarrassment on the part of researchers inhibit the free flow of information from participants. There are ways to get unstructured interviews going and to keep them going. For example, a researcher might ask the following:

> *Tell me about your experience with cancer. I want to hear the story in your own words. After you have completed your narrative if I have questions about what you've said or need clarification about a topic (concept), I'll ask you. But for now just talk freely.*

The use of the unstructured interview format does not mean that researchers have no influence over the course of an interview. Researchers set the main topic to be investigated. Nonverbal as well as verbal reactions made by researchers do not go unnoticed by interviewees. Participants might alter what they are saying or doing in response to researcher's reactions; therefore, researchers must be aware of their influence on the interview session. A researcher may bring a participant back on topic if the narrative drifts to a completely unrelated topic. However, a researcher has to assess carefully why the participant might have shifted the topic. What a researcher initially thinks is unrelated may, with further analysis, prove to be relevant to the discussion. For example, when I was interviewing couples managing chronic conditions at home, I found that when I first arrived in a home that participants wanted to show me pictures of their families or talk about their work or hobbies. At first, I didn't understand the reason for such talk. But on further examination of data, it became obvious that participants were trying to tell me that they were more than just their illness or condition. Sometimes participants find it too painful or embarrassing during an interview to continue discussing a topic. They need to withdraw for a moment to recover or redirect. This is where sensitivity on the part of the researcher comes into play. A thoughtful and caring researcher will allow participants to set the course and take the time that they need. It is always possible to return to the topic or ask additional questions at a later time.

To underscore the previously given point, Mishler (1986) viewed interviews as a form of discourse between a researcher and the person being interviewed. He said, "Questioning and answering are ways of speaking that are grounded in and depend on culturally shared and often tacit assumptions about how to express and understand beliefs, experiences, feelings, and intentions" (Mishler, 1986, p. 7). He went on to explain how the interview is shaped both in its construction and meaning through the questions that are asked, the pauses, facial expressions, and other verbal and nonverbal communications that occur between the respective parties.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Some researchers prefer semi-structured interviews because they enable researchers to maintain some consistency over the concepts that are covered in each interview. In a semi-structured interview, some topics are chosen before beginning the research based on the literature or practice. However, when and how the topics are presented is not structured. Many researchers feel more comfortable having a list of topics to fall back on—especially if participants are not overly talkative.

In semi-structured interviews, the same topics are covered in each interview. After the questions on the list have been covered, participants are free to add anything else to the interview that they might feel is relevant to the discussion. Also, researchers can ask additional questions to clarify certain points or to delve further into a topic. This form of interviewing makes it more difficult to be certain that the issues and problems relevant to participants are covered or that concepts derived during analysis of previous interviews are followed up on. Sometimes participants have something important they might want to add but because the researchers didn't ask about it the participants didn't think researchers were interested in that topic.

Structured Interviews

Structured interviews are interviews conducted using an interview guide. Each interviewee is given the same set of questions. Structured interviews provide consistency but are probably the least effective means of data collection in grounded theory research for several reasons. First, with a structured interview, the ability to make adjustments during data collection based on analysis of previous interviews is missing. This flexibility is necessary for theory construction. Second, structured interviews take away much control of the interview process from participants. This is because the topics that are covered are those deemed important by the researcher and perhaps are not the issues or problems important to participants. This goes against the whole nature of grounded theory, which is based on grounding the theory in the concerns and problems of participants. It has been our experience that participants usually respond only to the questions that are asked. They are too shy or reluctant to bring up other topics.

Issues in Interviewing

One of the most difficult aspects of interviewing for beginning researchers is facing periods of silence. The uninitiated researcher tends to jump in with questions or comments either redirecting the interview or breaking the thought process of the person being

interviewed. Two German biographical researchers, Riemann (2003) and Schütze (1992a, 1992b), have developed a style of interviewing and analysis that takes silences into account. They are considered important aspects of the interview and are analyzed for possible meaning.

It is not unusual for qualitative researchers to come across persons who agree to be interviewed but have little to say once the interview begins. Often the problem is that potential interviewees are uncomfortable and need a little nudging to get them talking. When this happens, and it has happened to all of us, it is good to have a couple of backup questions. Asking a few questions or talking about something of interest to both participant and interviewee often relaxes participants. It gives them a sense of direction, helps build trust, and shy respondents become more confident and talkative. A person may not have thoroughly thought about an issue and needs time to think for a few minutes before getting started with an interview or continuing further with a topic. Some topics generate a lot of emotion and a participant has to retreat into silence for a moment to gain composure. A skilled interviewer lets the interviewee guide the course of the interview and allows him or her to reveal information at his or her own pace while accepting pauses as part of the process. Information is likely to become more personal as confidence builds and participants realize that the interviewer is not there to pass judgment but to listen to what he or she he to say.

Though most persons don't mind being tape-recorded, participants often offer some of the most interesting data as soon as the tape recorder is turned off. There are many possible reasons for this. One reason for these end-of-interview "revelations" is that the interview process provides participants with the opportunity to talk in depth about issues that perhaps they hadn't talked much about before giving them greater insight into their own behavior. Participants might want to share this new insight once they've had time to think about it. Another reason, and probably the more plausible explanation, is that some persons feel embarrassed or uncomfortable revealing what they consider "sensitive information" when the tape recorder is on. They know the interviewer will use the material, but it is the thought of possible voice identification that makes them feel uncomfortable despite assurances that the tape will be destroyed after transcription. It is a good idea for an interviewer to bring pencil and paper in addition to a recorder to an interview just in case the recorder breaks down or the interviewee feels more comfortable talking with the recorder off. This researcher usually asks for permission to take notes, and interviewees have always agreed. If it is impossible to write notes at the time, interviewers should write down what they recall as soon as possible after leaving the interview site.

Observations

Fieldwork is often more difficult and certainly more time consuming than doing interviews. Perhaps this is one reason why interviewing is the method most frequently used by qualitative researchers. Some researchers think of fieldwork as specific to anthropologists—something to be done in exotic places—but observation is a fruitful means of data gathering regardless

of whether it occurs far or near home. Though doing observations is usually more time consuming than doing interviews, it has a lot to offer qualitative researchers and should be considered as an alternative or additional form of data collection.

Reasons for Doing Observations

The reason why observations are so important is that it is not unusual for persons to say they are doing one thing but in reality they are doing something else. The only way to know this is through observation. Anselm Strauss related an interesting story about what he and his coresearchers discovered when data collecting during their study of psychiatric institutions. They asked psychiatrists about their treatment philosophies as part of an interview. Later they did observations on the patient care units. What they discovered was that there was often a discrepancy between the philosophy of treatment expressed by psychiatrists and their actual treatment plans. When confronted with this fact, the psychiatrists responded, "You asked what our treatment philosophy was, not necessarily how we treat patients. We treat on the basis of what works for this patient" (Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, Ehrlich, & Sabshin, 1964).

Another reason for doing observations is that persons are not always aware of, or able to articulate, the subtleties of what goes on during interactions between themselves and others. Observations place researchers in the center of the action where they can see as well as hear what is going on. Patton (2002) stated, "Creative fieldwork means using every part of oneself to experience and understand what is happening." He went on to say, "Creative insights come from being directly involved in the setting being studied" (p. 302).

Issues When Doing Observations

Observations have their potential drawbacks. A researcher may give meaning to a witnessed action–interaction, but unless that meaning is checked out with participants, the researcher's interpretation may or may not be correct. That is why it is beneficial to combine observation with interview or leave open the possibility to verify interpretations with participants. Patton (2002) stated the following:

> *Nonverbal behaviors are easily misinterpreted, especially cross-culturally. Therefore, whenever possible and appropriate, having observed what appears to be significant behavior, some effort should be made to follow up with those involved to find out directly from them what the behavior really meant. (p. 291)*

There is so much going on in any social scene that it is difficult to know where to begin when doing observations. Many qualitative researchers use an observational guide, but sticking to an observational guide is not advised in grounded theory studies because they structure the observations too much and don't foster discovery. Therefore, knowing how to proceed in a grounded theory study is important. A researcher can begin by standing back and letting the scene before him or her unfold. Since it is impossible to capture every

bit of what is going on in a setting, the observer can start by jotting down a few general notes describing the area under observation such as what routine activities are going on, the personnel present, the pace and timing of activities, interactions taking place, and so on. At the same time, the researcher will be watchful for incidents or happenings that seem to be particularly interesting for some reason and that might bear closer inspection. If an incident happens that appears to be significant, the researcher can focus in and take detailed notes on what is happening, what is being said and done by whom, where, and with what consequences. The researcher can then follow up with questions about the incident with those involved and perhaps even come up with a concept or two to describe what was happening in the situation. This concept can later be followed up on in future observations in the same or another setting.

From our perspective, the important thing to keep in mind when doing interviews or observations is that concepts drive the research process. Where do these concepts come from? Let us give an example from our observational research of the roles and functions of nurse managers of hospital units (unpublished study). I began my first fieldwork session by meeting a head nurse as the nurse prepared for her day and followed her throughout the day, taking detailed notes about the head nurse's general routines. In addition, I focused on nonroutine incidents or problematic situations the head nurse encountered and took detailed notes about actions and interactions. Later that day, I related to the head nurse what she had observed and asked the nurse to explain what was happening in order to elaborate upon or to correct any misinterpretations that the researcher might have. The following day, I met with Strauss to analyze the previous day's field notes. The concepts and questions derived during that analytic session gave me some areas to look for when making the next set of observations. In addition, I was also alert for different events or happenings that might indicate new concepts.

Important Considerations Before Beginning Data Collection

This section will discuss the following:

- Committees and institutional review boards
- Interview and observational guides
- Informed consent
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Researcher responsibilities

Committees and Institutional Review Boards

No data collection can begin before researchers have presented their proposal to either their thesis or dissertation research committee members or in-house research committees for review. Next comes presenting the research protocol to institutional review boards (IRBs) for review. IRB groups usually have a standard form that describes what should

be included in the protocol as well as the consent form. They also require a copy of the interview and observational guide and a copy of the consent form. For example, when I was doing my research on pregnant women with chronic illness as part of my doctoral program, I first had to present the research proposal to my doctoral committee. Once the proposal was accepted, I was ready to move on. I obtained a copy of the research protocol requirements of the two universities with which I affiliated—one where I was a student and the other where I was employed—and then completed the required information and presented it to the universities' committees. The protocol included a title for the research; the research question; the research design and method to be used; the target population; a description of how data collection would proceed; the proposed number and types of participants to be included; information that no financial compensation would be given to participants; an explanation of how data would be handled and the rights of participants protected; researcher qualifications and supervision; proposed sites for data collection; a copy of the interview guide and consent form; how possible problems during data collection would be handled; description of potential risks to participants; telephone numbers; and referrals for care of participants, if needed. Once the protocol was reviewed, requested changes were made, and permission was granted, I went to the proposed data collection sites and presented my protocol for review by their IRBs. I wanted to obtain data from two different hospital clinics and, therefore, had to present the protocol to IRBs at each site. IRB committees usually meet once a month. Once that permission was obtained, I went to the clinics in which I was given permission to gather data and presented the study to those in charge and to other relevant employees in order to let them know I had all the needed permissions. I also wanted to obtain their cooperation in obtaining research participants. Staff usually approached potential participants first, briefly explained my study, and asked if they would be interested in talking to me. Those who were willing to listen to a description of my study were given an in-depth explanation of what would be expected of them in terms of participation and time involvement, how long the study would go on, and what my role would be. Participants were told there would be no financial reimbursement for their participation. Then they were offered the option to refuse or participate at this time. Willing participants were given a copy of the consent form. We both signed the form in the presence of a witness, and a copy was given to the participant along with pertinent phone numbers. The participant was advised of her right to withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to her care or penalty. Only then was I able to collect data.

Interview and Observational Guides

Most committees and IRBs require the use of interview or observational guides even in grounded theory studies. This does not present a problem. Most researchers are sufficiently familiar with the literature related to the area they want to study or have experience in that area and can put together an interview or observational guide. The guide serves as an introduction into an interview or observation; however, it should not be used to structure the

interview in a grounded theory study. What is important to put into the research protocol given to IRBs is that participants will be free to bring up topics that are of importance to them that might not be covered in the interview or observational guide. If the topics are of a sensitive nature, researchers will remind participants that the data might possibly be used in publications and then give them the opportunity to change the topic. Regardless, anonymity will be protected. If participants ask researchers to turn off the tape recorder, they should do so. If participants change their mind and do not want the material used, the researchers have an obligation to delete the material even if the request is made sometime after the interview.

Informed Consent

A researcher can never be certain why persons agree to be research participants; all a researcher can do is ask potential participants if they are willing to participate in a study and then be sensitive to their nonverbal as well as verbal responses. If after reading the consent form and hearing an explanation about the study there is hesitation on the part of a potential participant, it may be an indication that the participant is not certain if he or she wants to participate. It may be that a potential participant needs further explanations about the research or assurances about confidentiality. However, if after providing additional information a person still seems reluctant, that person should be excused from participation and given assurance that there will be no repercussions now or later because of the lack of participation.

Once persons or a group agree to participate, the potential participants should be asked to sign two consent forms: one copy for the researcher and the other for the participant. At the same time, participants should be assured even though they have agreed in writing to participate in the study that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during the research process without repercussions or jeopardy to their job or health care, or whatever the case might be. It may be necessary during the course of a study to re-inform the participant of the nature of a study and his or her right to re-consent or refuse to continue—especially if unexpected or embarrassing events occur during the course of an interview or observation. A researcher may also feel that he or she can't continue with an interview or observation if something happens that makes him or her uncomfortable or fearful. Always use good judgment and trust your instincts. Researchers should explain to participants that anything they say or do will be kept confidential; all identifying information will be removed from transcription and field notes; and if there are recordings, once the transcription is completed the recording will be erased or deleted.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of participants are important aspects of doing research. There are many different techniques for protecting anonymity and confidentiality, and these are fully discussed in text on data collection and also in books on ethics (see

Suggested Readings at the end of this chapter). Most institutions have IRBs and committees in place to ensure that safeguards to confidentiality and anonymity exist.

Researcher Responsibilities

The steps that a researcher will take are spelled out in the research protocol that is submitted to the school and/or IRBs. It is the researcher's responsibility to follow through with the procedures indicated in the protocol.

In addition, researchers have a responsibility to treat participants in a manner that they would want to be treated throughout the research process. A safe rule is if the researcher doesn't think he or she would like it, then participants probably won't like it either. There is another point to be made: People have the right to let their voices be heard. Sometimes a researcher feels uncomfortable or awkward obtaining and listening to interviews or reporting on something that is observed because of some personal bias against certain behaviors, a fear that they might be revealing the identity of participants, or that it might prove embarrassing. However, participants usually give consent to participate in a research study because they want the story told even if what they have to say is very personal. However, if participants request that something they said or did be removed from the interview or observation, the researcher has an obligation to do so.

While confidentiality is of utmost importance, if a researcher witnesses or hears something (such as abuse) during an observation or interview that is potentially harmful to the participant or others, the researcher has an obligation to report that behavior to the appropriate authorities. An exception would be when studying persons who are engaged in illicit behaviors, such as drug addiction or prostitution. However, even in these cases, if a person's life is in danger the researcher has an obligation to notify the appropriate authorities. Maintaining the confidentiality of participants is important not only when collecting data but also later when writing the findings. Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland (2006) stated the following:

> *One of the central obligations that field researchers have with respect to those they study is the guarantee of anonymity via the "assurance of confidentiality"—the promise that the real names of persons, places, and so forth will not be used in the research report or will be substituted by pseudonyms. (p. 51)*

There are exceptions. Some participants specifically request to have their name used, and with written consent, the researcher may do so. However, both Strauss and I usually assign participants a number or a pseudonym and try to disguise the situation if we think that the participant is likely to be recognized by others.

There is one additional point that we want to make. A researcher should never remove documents from an organization without authorization or consent. Some documents contain confidential information that could be harmful to the persons or the institutions involved if that information becomes public. Sometimes information is proprietary and not for sharing because of potential competition.

Perspectives, Biases, and Assumptions

Every researcher has perspective, biases, and assumptions that they bring with them to the research process. These impact every aspect of the research from the topic chosen to study to the audiences for whom articles and books are written. This is a given fact about which there is no dispute. The questions are as follows: Is it always harmful? What can be done about it?

This section of the chapter will explore the following:

- Researcher biases and assumptions
- Strategies for controlling intrusion of perspectives, biases, and assumptions
- Differing opinions

Researcher Biases and Assumptions

In Chapter 2, we described how Strauss's background in pragmatism and interactionism has shaped his worldview, his assumptions, and his approach to analysis. These have been built into the methodology. A researcher can accept or reject the method on the basis of this knowledge. In addition to the worldviews, biases, and assumptions that are built into method, each researcher brings his or her set of these characteristics to the research process. This is not necessarily bad in all aspects—especially when it comes to choosing the research problem, setting the research question, and choosing the audience for whom to write. Naturally, if a researcher is in the field of education, he or she would want to study problems related to his or her discipline because that is the area to which the researcher wants to contribute. The same goes for sociologists, psychologists, nurses, and physicians as well as persons working in the communications field, engineering, and so on.

It is when it comes to analysis that perspectives, biases, and assumptions can have their greatest impact. The impact comes in the meaning given to data, the concepts used to stand for that meaning, the questions that are asked, and comparisons that are made. Naturally, being a nurse, I would approach analysis from this perspective. This can be good because it keeps the findings within the discipline of choice. But it also has its drawbacks. For example, when doing my study on pregnant women with chronic conditions, my analysis denoted that most of the action–interaction in the scene centered around the notion of risks, which varied from high to low over the course of the pregnancy and sometimes over the course of a day. So I started organizing my data into patterns, trying to match women's actions and interaction with risk level. What I found was that actions and interactions did not always match risk level. I went back and again studied the data. It finally dawned on me that I was assigning women into risk categories according to the medical definition of the risks rather than according to women's perceptions of the risk level, which sometimes differed from the medical definition. Once I had this insight, I went back and looked at women's definitions of the risk level and found that the actions–interactions that they took matched. I had made the assumption that the women would have the same definitions as the health care team. My new insight busted that assumption wide open.

Strategies for Controlling Intrusion of Perspectives, Biases, and Assumptions

Keeping a Journal

The first thing a researcher can do is be aware. Though researchers can never know the full extent of their biases, they can make an effort to get in touch with those different aspects of self and think through how these might impact the research projects they are about to embark upon. This is where the journal is most useful. In the journal, researchers can start at the beginning of the project, asking why they decided to study this problem, and ask these research questions and not others. During data collection, the researchers can note their reactions to what is being said or done. It is important to be aware during an interview of the reciprocal influence that participant and researcher can have on each other. Researchers can influence what participants say or do based on verbal and nonverbal responses. Participants can bring about a response in researchers, making them feel angry, sad, happy, or uncomfortable by what they say and do. The journal is the place where a researcher can write this down. The same holds true for analysis. Not only is it important for researchers to keep a record of the products of analyses in memos, but it is also equally important that they keep a record of their own responses to data, checking themselves out in the meanings they are giving to data, the concepts they use, and the types of questions they are asking. One added point here is that feeling overwhelmed, fatigued, and torn between multiple responsibilities can all affect how a researcher responds to data, and notations about these should be included in the journal. When it comes to finalize the research and write, the accumulation of all that has been written in the journal can be helpful. The researcher can check for signs of biases and assumptions and make note of these when writing about the research—especially when discussing limitations. Sometimes an article or chapter in a book can be written detailing the author's experience, acknowledging biases and steps taken to limit their intrusion.

Using the Method

Grounded theory methodology has some built-in checks and balances, and while these do not eliminate the intrusion of biases or negate assumptions, they can help control for these. The first aspect of method that is useful is the constant comparisons that are made throughout the research where data is matched against data not only for similarities and differences but also for consistency, with researchers being able to check into how they give meaning and conceptualize. Then there are the questions that researchers can ask of the data. The more questions about possible meaning that are asked during open coding, the more analytic options researchers have to consider when giving meaning and to check out against incoming data. There are the other analytic strategies (see Chapter 5) like the use of *metaphors, turning data upside down,* and *asking what if* that can help researchers think about data in new and different ways, which is always helpful. *Waving the red flag* is another way of reminding researchers about the possible intrusion of assumptions.

In summary, the intrusion of perspective, biases, and assumptions can't be completely eliminated when doing a grounded theory or any qualitative study. However, intrusion can be controlled to some degree by keeping a research journal that fosters self-awareness and the systematic application of research strategies that provide researchers with an assortment of analytic options that can be matched against data for possible meaning. Examining the researcher's influence on the research process is important, as Chesney (2001) stated the following:

> *I support the autobiographical analysis of self, not as separate from or in competition with the ethnographic words of the women but as a nurturing bed to place the research finding in and as part of the transparency of the research process. Reflecting honestly and openly has helped me retain some integrity and develop insight and self-awareness, and it has given me a certain self confidence. (p. 131)*

Differing Opinions

The degree of importance that researchers attach to maintaining self-awareness and the extent to which they implement strategies to control intrusion of biases and assumptions varies. Each researcher must consider how much time and effort to put into keeping a journal and recording feelings and thoughts. However, there is still some debate about the ability of persons to have insight into the self. Cutcliffe (2003) made an interesting point when he asked how we can completely account for ourselves in the research since so much of what transpires takes place within the deeper levels of consciousness. Nevertheless, reflexivity remains, as Finlay (2002) stated, a "valuable tool" to do the following:

- Examine the impact of the position, perspective, and presence of the researcher;
- Promote rich insight through examining personal responses and interpersonal dynamics;
- Empower others by opening up a more radical consciousness;
- Evaluate the research process, method, and outcomes; and
- Enable public scrutiny of the integrity of the research through offering a methodological log of research decisions. (p. 532)

I found self-reflection to be a very natural and necessary process when doing the research project on the Vietnam War veterans presented in Chapters 12 through 16 in this book. Self-reflection was cathartic, and it helped me to see how I was slanting the data collection and analysis. I noticed that as I reviewed and thought about what I wrote in the memos, some were more reflective of my emotional response to the data than a conceptualization of what my respondents were telling me. I rewrote those memos, but I could certainly see how the self enters into data collection and analysis. Not that it is all bad; it's just that it is important to be aware. See Wicker (1985) for an excellent discussion on "Getting Out of Our Conceptual Ruts."

The Literature

Researchers bring to the inquiry a considerable background in professional and disciplinary literature. This background may be acquired while studying for examinations or simply to "keep up" with the field. During the research itself, analysts often discover biographies, memoirs, manuscripts, reports, or other materials that seem pertinent to the area under investigation. The question that arises is as follows: How can the literature be used to enhance rather than constrain analysis? To begin with, readers can be assured that there is no need to review all of the literature in the area of investigation beforehand. It is impossible to know prior to beginning a grounded theory study what concepts will be derived from data and what their relevance to the research will be. Also, researchers don't want to be so steeped in the literature that they are constrained and even stifled by it. It is not unusual for a student to become greatly distressed when coming across a study or theory that deals with the same topic he or she wished to study, and that appears to cover the topic thoroughly. The student wonders what new knowledge can be derived by further research. Rest assured that since each investigation is somewhat different, new information will be uncovered. Becker (1986) made a good point when he said, "Use the literature, don't let it use you" (p. 149).

There are two kinds of literature relevant to our discussion of grounded theory:

- The technical literature
- The nontechnical literature

The Technical Literature

In this book, ***technical literature*** refers to research reports, theoretical or philosophical papers, and other information characteristic of professional and disciplinary writing. Though the following list is by no means exhaustive, it does describe how the technical literature may be used:

- Making comparisons
- Enhancing sensitivity
- Providing descriptive materials
- Supplying questions for initial observations and interviews
- Stimulating analytic questions
- Confirming findings

Making Comparisons

Concepts derived from the literature can provide a source for making comparisons within and between data as long as the comparisons are made along conceptual lines and at the property and dimensional level and are not handled as data per se. If a concept