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All is Data

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All Is Data

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.....Although data is plural “is” sounds better

All is data” is a well known Glaser dictum. What does it mean? It means that exactly what is going on in the research scene is the data, what ever the source, whether interview, observations, documents. It is not just what is being, how it is being and the conditions of its being told, but all the data surrounding what is being told. It means what is going on has to be figured out exactly what it is for conceptualization, NOT description. Data is always as good as far as it goes, and there is always more to keep correcting the categories with more relevant properties.

All is data is a grounded theory statement, not applicable to QDA. Data is discovered for conceptualization to be what it is for a theory. It is discovered by constant comparison which generates a category and properties that vary it.

The data is what it is and the researcher collects, codes and analyzes exactly what he has: whether baseline data, properline data, vague data, interpreted data or conceptual data (see “Doing GT”). There is no such thing as bias, or objective or subjective, interpreted or misinterpreted, etc. It is what the researcher is receiving (as a human being, which is inescapable). Data is what the researcher is constantly comparing with tedium, to be sure, as he generates categories and their properties. Remember again, the product will be transcending abstraction, NOT accurate description.

While the QDA researcher may be disappointed with what he is collecting, the GT researcher’s job is to analyze its components, its type of data, and take a conceptual perspective on it. Good as far as it goes means the GT researcher is always doing a perspective on a perspective (data) with the goal of generating a theory that resolves continually a main concern, which, as I have said many times, accounts for the main action in a substantive area.

For the GT researcher the world is totally empirical. As he collects data his job is to deal with exactly what is happening, not

what he would want to happen, not what his own interest would wish the data to be. The data is not “truth” it is not “reality”. It is exactly what is happening. The GT researcher has to be oriented to each course of action having its own meaning. To be sure it does. And once the GT researcher lets this meaning emerge and sees the pattern, he/she will feel “sure” that this is what is going on. This sureness can not be known beforehand. It emerges conceptually through constant comparison.

That the data may not be reality or the truth, should not disturb the GT researcher. He should keep in mind that, after all, socially structured, vested fictions run the world, accurate descriptions run a poor second. Thus data is what is occurring, it is socially produced and it is up to the GT researcher to figure it out, BECAUSE the participants are doing it, talking it, using it, think it, are it, respond to it, offer it and so forth. It is going on right in front of the GT researcher! For example, treating talk (an interview) as data comprises not just what was said, but that the talk was given, in a certain way, in a certain context, with a certain endurance, in a culture, with talk story attached etc., etc. The same reasoning applies to reticent talk, shyness, silence etc.

While the GT researcher is not concerned with forced accuracy, he has the job of being honest in comparing exactly what the data is on as many dimensions as possible. Again, not want he wants the data to be, nor what he did not take the time to figure out. This is part of the GT method brought out by constant comparisons, which conceptually bring out the proper distortions (fictions) inherent in all situations.

The “all is data” prospective requires many, many incidents to compare and saturate categories to emerge the variations, which others may term distortions. No one incident categories are part of the GT method, as they may be in impressionistic QDA (see “Doing GT”). The constant comparing of incident to incident and incident to category and its properties is a must, to bring out what data is actually going on. The one incident concept commits a version of the ecological fallacy. A particularistic (one person) source of a concept is generalized to a pattern applicable to many people. An impressionistically grounded concept leads to a grounded conjecture, not a grounded theory. It can be used with the pattern rhetoric and a macerated sound bit approach to saying GT has been generated, with no notion of the systematic nature by which it should be generated.

In comparing incidents, in most researches this is dominated by one type of data, usually an interview-observation in field notes. This is not hard comparing; it just takes conceptualizing thought. But uniformity of data is not required for comparing. Diverse data from other emergent sources can be compared. By diverse I mean whatever may come the GT researcher's way while theoretically sampling: documents and current statistics, newspaper articles, questionnaire results, social structural and interactional observations, interview, casual comments, global and cultural statements, historical documents, whatever, whatever as it bears on the categories.

How far the GT researcher goes depends on his theoretical sampling, skill, maturity and the emergent. Most beginning GT researchers are somewhat timid about their ability to do GT. They, therefore, prefer the uniformity of data collection from a site where the area of interest goes on. This frequent approach of the beginner sets him/her up for description capture, since it mirrors some QDA requirements about uniform data. However the set up is a safe harbor until a true GT is generated; he can fall back on a QDA description. It is not unwise for a start in GT research, but not necessary!

How far the GT researcher goes in diversity of data to compare is based on some judgment, but more so on what emerges as the researcher goes to comparative groups. Diverse data is a delimited occurrence. Anselm and I, in doing the dying studies, as mature researchers, compared everything in sight to bring out our awareness context theory.

One frequent problem GT researchers have, especially beginners, is wanting the truth in an area dealing with "delicate matters". However, they just get properline data or what they are suppose to hear and see. There is no reason to be honest as a participant, as revealment can easily bring troublesome consequences. But properline data is the data, and it tells us what is going on to prevent people from knowing what is actually going on. The study can be seen conceptually as one of how the public is handled based on concealment, nonrevealment or hidden agendas. It may take infiltration as a participant-observer to find out what is concealed. This becomes another study. Vague data, interpreted data or conceptual data may result in the same study of derailing revealment. They all obfuscate. They are normative properties of spinning. The QDA quest for accuracy is out of place

in a GT research.

Data Worry, Data Doubt

The concern with accuracy of data, comes from and yields an immense literature on data worry, data doubt and the need to produce accurate descriptions. Data is always suspected as bias, subjective not objective, untrue, poorly interpreted, bad or contaminated and otherwise distorted and suspect. It is suspected humbly by the researcher, who wants readers to believe it anyway, and strongly by critics, who say it just is not what is. This indictment is continuous, especially by arrogant quantitative researchers. Strenuous corrections are always advised.

This critique is moot for GT as GT produces abstractions not descriptions. Distortions are just more variables to conceptualize and make a part of the analysis. Remember though, to be relevant distortions must earn their way into the theory as they are conceptualized. GT reduces a distortion to the theory depending on what theory is emergent and how relevant it is to the theory as another category or property of it. Multiple methods of data collection are good for diversity of comparisons, but multiple methods of data correction are not necessary. All is data is “what is” as it comes “as is”.

At the end of this chapter I will deal with some of the discussions of overconcern with distortions of data type, to show how GT frees its researchers from this tyranny.

Transcending Worrisome Data

Data worry, data doubt as I said, permeates all methods of QDA. It is a constant tyranny. All (almost) researchers, who describe, work the polar opposite of feeling the data is condemned to distortion and trying to legitimate it as objectified to the point of being accurate and of being evidence. They admit the distortion and insist on the legitimacy of their factual descriptions. They give up positivism yet use its canons for data: accuracy, objectivity, reproducibility and so forth. They constantly argue for acceptance of their somewhat wrong data as “OK” under the circumstances, conditions and contest.

I have not seen one article that considers conceptualization that considers abstraction from time, place and people that considers this as freedom from the tyranny of normal distortion by humans doing description. GT is a methodology that provides

this conceptual freedom in a highly scholarly and useful way. GT makes the condemnation and preoccupation with accuracy and evidence moot.

GT gives this freedom from distortion tyranny to data that is sourced from interpretations, constructions, voice of participant, personal experience of various kinds, culturally differential, language differential, objective-subjective, value laden, behavior vs. spoken, truth vs. properline, credibility of informants, selective data collection, selective non-random sampling, multiple versions of the truth, historical, biographical, gender bias, varying interview and observation techniques. The reader may think of more sources. To repeat in this context, all that GT does is to rigorously generate conceptual hypotheses that get applied with fit, relevance and workability (explanatory).

Since there is no literature on the freedom from accuracy brought on by GT, I will consider here how GT frees up several sources of worrisome data.

Hard Data

The elite, haloed data of science is hard data. It is the data of the biological and natural sciences. It is hopefully what survey researchers produce as quantified. It is bedrock data. By comparisons qualitative data is called soft and demeaned as such, implying that it is rife with subjectivity that make it inaccurate and uncountable. It is seen as another form of contrived journalism. It is seen as not being able to “sort fact from fiction” one authors says, because it has “no rigorous, critical standards.”

Without arguing on these merits, GT brings freedom to this invidious comparison. Categories and their properties apply fully variable. They leave the time, place and people of hard data or soft data. It is not truth that transcends; it is conceptualization! The data for GT research is not seen as limited data needing scientific support, as it is in QDA description. GT research data is just “whatever” data to compare.

Reproducibility

Another worry about QDA data is whether or not it is reproducible by others. In this way, another researcher can come back to the same action scene and reproduce the events described by another to verify the descriptions. Or, would another researcher find the same material. This is a check on whatever

bias may occur, so it will not be seen as particularistic to one researcher.

This is not relevant to the GT abstraction. It is conceptual and applies to any action scene. Furthermore new (albeit different) data from the same site simply get compared and modify the theory. The indicators need not be reproducible, just comparable and interchangeable for conceptualization. Theoretical sampling also takes the researcher to site spreading, which makes reproducing the same data for similar abstractions virtually impossible.

Reproducibility is also irrelevant for GT, because new data, whether the same or not just get compared to develop new properties of categories that saturate the categories. Saturation is that no new interchangeable indicators emerge to add more properties to the categories, which are of relevance. If another theory is developed from the same site since highly different data are found, then we just have another GT, that's all. Each grounded theory with its general implications stands on its own. For example one can find supernormalizing in similar data that yielded cutting back: in data on heart attack victims and sports injuries. They are a paired dichotomy, related by being at different ends of the same continuum but standing on their own. Each was a different dissertation.

If the incidents to compare are events that could never be reproduced, that GT is even more freeing and powerful, since it conceptualizes the underlying patterns in seemingly different events. An example is social protest events, any one which cannot be reproduced but many certainly can be compared for generating a GT of non political social protests.

Selection Bias

Selection bias refers to non-random sampling for the purpose of consciously or not so consciously getting a preferred distortion in the data. Deliberate selection bias over — represents cases at one end of the distribution. This then confirms a preferred hypothesis or yields a preferred description, or it just produces preferred distortions with no purpose or an external purpose. The larger the sampling of people, cases, units or event selectivity the more general the factual distortions appear, but they still are distorted by bias.

Again GT conceptualization by constant comparison will show the underlying bias as it emerges — for bias is just another variable. It is an independent variable which varies other variables in the preferred direction. GT conceptualization frees us from the tyranny of selection bias' affect on data and the tyranny of explaining it away.

Theoretical sampling is diametrically opposed to selection bias. The theoretical sample is chosen for theoretical saturation of categories. Theoretical sampling directs selection for a theoretical purpose. If bias creeps in, then it will surface as another category by constant comparison and saturation.

Writing Authority

The implied claim of all writing in social science is that the description must be correct if it is published. The writer is assumed to be a competent observer who reports accurately on self and others. Publishing legitimizes descriptive writings. It is the mystique. Except for a few critiques, which most people do not read, publication certifies authoritativeness. Thus publication certifies distortions of the objective in descriptions. It is hard for most readers to appraise the research techniques used in a paper or monograph. We trust the editors who review the writing before publication and they may, and usually so, favor the bias in descriptions. This is just the way it is and always will be.

However, this authoritative attribution is moot for GT. GT categories and their properties are fully variable as applied. The applier is not wedded to any position as emergent fit goes on, as modification goes on and as generalizing is accomplished when applying the theory. It is the conceptions (categories and their properties) in writings that grab the reader and who knows how they will in fact use them. If the conceptual statements are reduced to description, the power of variable fit and relevance is lost. This reduction however does not ruin the abstract ideas and the abstract promise of GT.

Personal Predilections

There are several ways that personal predilections distort descriptions. To mention several which all overlap, they are prejudices, value laden, ethics, ideology, psychological blocks, spinning distrusts, preconceptions that are unchangeable, oversimplification, axes to grind in favor of a position, human

limits by culture, education, etc., differential perceptions and interpretations, intense reflexivity and self accounting as a researcher proceeds, an immaculate description need no matter how the data falls, methodological entrapment on how to process knowing, romantizing, exaggeration and so forth. I am sure the reader can add to this list. These are all quite human and inescapable totally. They are just able to be limited as much as possible in effecting the description.

GT rescues us from this personal biasing whatever the source. Once the theory is generated it, as we saw above, has total conceptual endurance and generality however someone may distort its use. Cultivating, supernormalizing, credentializing, desisting residual self, pluralistic dialoguing, cutting back, client controlling, enhancing creativity and so many others grounded in GT research just exist abstractly. Personal predilection variables simply emerge as variable in the theory and are put into relief by constant comparing and theoretical saturation. They are not discounted if relevant, there is no need to explain away the concept based for example on a particular value. The distorting effect of the bias must earn its way by working as part of the GT.

A last note on personal experience as data. From the point of view of GT, there is no such thing. It is just another interview and/or observation to be compared into the theory by constant comparison. It is no more. By comparing we then see how particularistic, eccentric, idiosyncratic, normative, structured etc., the experience is. This applies to journals on “lived experience”, biographies or whatever the source however rich it may appear. GT research is after conceptualization of social — psychological patterns, NOT of individual patterns whether described or conceptualized.

No matter how apparently insightful and objective an individual account may appear of an area of interest, it is still just individual. It is just a set of incidents to compare to many others from other people. Learned informants may be valuable in a research, but they must constantly be checked on by other data; must saturate by theoretical sampling of many other participant incidents. Personal experience research is just that, personal experience, not social psychological research.

In sum, GT is on an abstract level. It is bias neutral and fully variable. And to be sure it can be applied with bias by an

individual who wants to issue it out, whether manifestly or latently, awaredly or unawaredly.

Construction

One major worry in QDA research is a different take on personal predilection. It is seen as the researcher being a constructionist or a constructor of data. Listen to this author. "A strategy of inquiry comprises a bundle of skills, assumptions and practices that researchers employ as they move from their paradigm to the empirical world. Strategies of inquiry put paradigms of interpretation into motion. At the same time, strategies of inquiry connect the researcher to specific methods of collecting and analyzing empirical materials. Most methods rely on interviewing, observing and document analysis. Qualitative research is endlessly creative and interpretive. The researcher does not just leave the field with mountains of empirical materials and then easily write up his of her findings. Qualitative interpretations are constructed."

The point is clear in this orientation, data is constructed with interpretations. This QDA approach is clear, volumes of data are collected according to a preconceived framework. Writing up this mountain of data is not easy even with a framework. The QDA researcher constructs first the data and then the write up. The resulting descriptions therefore suffer from all the personal distortions mentioned above and more I discuss briefly below.

Listen to this author: "Transformations in data occur when ignorance and misapprehensions give way to more informed insights by means of a dialectical interaction. Knowledge consists of those constructions about which there is relative consensus among those competent to interpret the substance of the construction. Multiple knowledges can coexist, and these constructions are subject to continuous revision with changes most likely to occur when relatively different constructions are brought into juxtapositions in a dialectical context. Knowledge accumulates by a process of accretion with each fact serving as a kind of building block which adds to the growing edifice of knowledge based on more informed and sophisticated constructions which progress over time."

GT research, again, transcends this constructionist cumulative approach. Properly done, GT research delimits the data collected and provides the emerging framework for analysis.

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), vol.6, no.2

This limits construction and then the ensuing conceptual analysis, as I have already said, abstractly reveals the biasing categories as well as the other categories. What is going on, goes on abstractly no matter the take of the constructions and interpretations based on more and more building blocks yielding more accurate meaning. More and more data for GT just leads to more constant comparison which leads to modifications and generalizability. This worrisome take of constructions on data collection and analysis for description and the accumulation of knowledge are moot for GT conceptual generation. All is data, and GT is good as far as it goes, and can always go further to more theoretical completeness for a substantive area and then on to formal theory based on comparisons of data from many groups.

For example, a theory on becoming a nurse can be put on a more formal level of becoming a professional by comparing the substantive theory to data from theoretically sampling of many professional schools on the relevant categories. The accumulation of knowledge for GT is not more precise data for description, it is more abstract theory or formal theory (see “Status Passage”, “Organizational Careers” and “More Grounded Theory Methodology,” all by Glaser.)

Another example is that a basic social process like default remodeling in corporate banking takeovers goes on, and is neutral to the distortions of data. In fact the whole study may be on the proper distortion of a basic social process, say on the properline that the takeover is cooperative. But the process is neutral to bias and a fully variable abstraction to be applied to all corporate takeovers with more comparisons based on theoretical sampling.

Lastly, a constructionist’s assumption is that constructs are constitutive of being human. Constructs are thought objects that try to grasp social reality which get more accurate as constructs get more sophisticated. By the same token GT conceptualizations are constitutive of being human also and GT becomes more verified as categories saturate and the theoretical completeness is reached. Fit and work and relevance is the goal of GT to strive for, not accuracy.

Verbal-Actual Behavior

Accuracy of description is big on this source of bias between telling about behavior as seeing it. Given the popularity of

interviewing in QDA, some authors worry: "The mistake is to treat the verbal formulations of subjects as an appropriate substitute for the observation of actual behavior". Or "Such studies may suffer from the gap between beliefs and action, between what people say and what they do." Or, "We only get into difficulties if we treat patients' responses as standing in a one-to-one account with what happened in the actual consultation. Exaggerated stories give vent to thoughts which had gone on unvoiced at the time of the consultation." Or, "stories, no matter their political spin, represent part of the substantive theory that will be generated. It is not that the participant is untruthful, it is rather that he does not wish to tell the whole story since this might put the story and him in a bad light."

This is a perennial problem in accessing the distortion of a QDA description that is based on telling behavior much more than observing it. Participants properline to strangers with ease. The GT research method treats all as data and the study is on what is given to the researcher, verbally and actually, not an abstract view of accuracy, but an abstract theory of what is going on.

A preponderance of verbal data yielding a GT theory is merely modified by constant comparisons when observation or documents become part of the theoretically sampled for data. Grounded theory is good as far as it goes, remember! It may slowly be modified by observations bringing out more properties closer to reality, but never neglecting the reality of the participants' view, while being sure that a gap is maintained between verbal and actual.

For the GT researcher the issue is all is data, whether private or public, revealed or concealed, words or behavior. It all bears on generating concepts for the core variable or basic social process being studied. The talk is data, the behavior is data and the gap between them and its sources is data. The emergent theory should sort it out conceptually. What actually goes on is all of it.

This verbal-behavioral data juncture goes on frequently in business studies, where properlining is the norm, since concealing information is so important. Descriptions may be inaccurate. But GT conceptual hypotheses can be quite relevant and subsequent data does not correct so much as it just generates

modifications. For GT the quest for “what is really going on,” is just that, in full abstraction; it is not actual behavior.

Gender Bias

The history of feminist thought has been brought out clearly in feminist qualitative research. As Virginia Olesen says, “Whatever the qualitative research style, and whether or not self-consciously defined as feminist, these many voices share the outlook that it is important to center and make problematic women’s diverse situations and the institutions and frames that influence those situations, and then to refer the examination of that problematic to theoretical, policy or action frame works in the interest of realizing social justice for women.”

Unless focused directly on women or a woman’s problem, male gender dominance in QDA research, according to feminists, still exerts control. However male oriented, influence frameworks as well as a healthy white female middle class dominant frameworks are crumbling in the face of steadily incisive criticisms of women of color, this world feminists, disabled women, and lesbian women. Now a substantial body of feminist research ranges over the full span of qualitative methods. Gender dominance favoring males is diminishing in qualitative description.

While important in QDA research, gender bias is irrelevant for GT research. GT research is gender neutral as it is for all face sheet variables. Gender like race, color, ethnicity, age, education, religions, culture, social class and so forth must earn its way into a GT as a relevant variable. When relevant in a GT, gender will emerge as a variant of the dependent variable.

For example in pluralistic dialoguing gender is only relevant if the males on the team either defer to “take charge” ladies (nurses) or dominate their stereotypes. It did not emerge. Competence was a major factor and there is no gender monopoly over competence. In another study of same sex (lesbian) marriages, we found that the emergent division of labor between the couple was the same for heterosexual marriages. Gender was not an issue. In another study of woman’s health clinics, gender did emerge as relevant in women relating to a female doctor sensitive to woman’s problems. Judith Wuest’s article: “Precarious Ordering: A Theory of Women’s Caring” focus’s on the demand on women to provide care. This bias focus misses the

whole literature on entrapment care of disabled, elderly, infants, etc. which falls on spouses of either gender or family members of either gender. The demand for care, which is inescapable is gender neutral.

Thus in GT research when gender emerges as relevant, fine, bring it into the theory, but not until then. Yet the feminists will try to issue-out from the start a neutral conceptual analysis to being a woman's issue when it is general or gender neutral. The issuing-out comes after generating a conceptually neutral GT theory when it is applied and the issue can be turned many ways, for example, to color, economic class, type illness, age (elderly) gender or what. Gender has no priority on issues. The over-focus on gender may be fine for routine QDA feminist researchers. It has no place in generating GT which is abstract from people.

The tacit assumption of male tone, male dominance, male focus, is empirical in the data and neutralized in the conceptualization of the GT. Reverse dominance is just as relevant. So beginning bias is another preconceived forcing of the data.

Value Laden Inquiry

There is probably no such research producing value free objective description, which transcends opinion or bias. Even hard science has its own soft work when it turns to interpreting hard findings by conjecture seeded with values. These interpretations are typical descriptive material only more or less grounded in other research conjecturally related to the findings. Only GT abstractions are value neutral. They can be applied based on any value.

There are several sources of value laden research which almost by definition ignores accuracy in favor of taking a position. Value laden inquiry comes from a particular world view, religion, a political stance, a gender stance, ethics, a hard-line methodological view, a granting organization with a cause, etc. This distortion of accuracy is not of concern to the QDA researcher doing the research. It is his job to distort properly. It is only of concern to the reader judging its merit. The reader tries to judge who owns the knowledge coming from the research sufficiently well which allows the researcher to cast it with appropriate values.

This distortion overlaps with much of what I have said above. The value which distorts soon emerges as a category when applying GT methodology to the same data for generating a theory. It may be a value of the participant or the researcher. No matter, its impact in the GT will be seen abstractly, however unchanged the QDA description. For example in a study of disavowing credit among ward nurses, it soon becomes apparent that the disavowing was a value based on the authority structure in medicine. The nurse, whatever her achievement, should defer credit to the doctor in charge.

By the same token the researcher may add his/her values to interpretations of the data which distort it. Again GT being value neutral will begin to show the value as a category in analyzing the same data by GT methodology. This was seen clearly in a GT study of discharging patients in a private psychiatric residence. A previous study described the discharging based on curing very troublesome patients. Curing was successful and of great value. A GT study explained the discharging as getting rid of troublesome, incurable patients and keeping the successfully treated in order to maintain a calm sentimental order in the facility which made the facility appear as successful.

The Voice

QDA research, once legitimized many years back, was revolutionary on the dimension that AT LAST it gave the participants the chance to be heard as they wanted to be heard, not as some preconceived questions would steer them. The participants voice was listened too! This, of course, ushered in the problem of worrisome distortion in reporting the voice to others. Could the researcher listen at all or listen well enough, was he patient enough, was he listening with bias, was he listening with cognitive disjunctures (speaking past each other), could the researcher handle the lack of uniformity of listening to many voices (when giving up the uniformity of preconceived questions) and so forth. We have seen above how “voice” data could be distorted in so many ways.

The QDA researcher listens to the data in terms of a preconceived framework to help him organize it. The GT researcher is in seventh heaven listening to what ever is voiced as he constantly compares to discover the participants main concern and the core category and sub categories. The GT researcher

knows that latent patterns exist and will emerge complete with conceptualized distortions as variables relevant to a GT explaining the ongoing action. The constant comparing will correct and precise the meaning involved even as it abstracts the relevant categories. In contrast the QDA can only hope his pre-research devised framework will work to yield a not too distorted description.

Now-a-days QDA is in fashion and problems are studied from the perspective of the participants. QDA types will vary on their approach to the voice: one phenomenologist said “more precisely phenomenological research where the primacy of the subjective experience of the participant takes precedence over the interpretation of the researcher.”

Thus from a history not being heard research has swung to intense in depth listening to the voice. Critiques of how the “voice” is listened to actually often stifle the listening in the service of getting it right. Efforts at objective reporting description yield to subjective recounts. Objective pretence is given up. Writing authoritativeness is used in its stead: if it is in writing it must be close to accuracy. Verisimilitude is used: truth and proof are the same for tests of objectification. The canons of objective, natural science are still trying to be adhered to. Also these QDA researchers feel strongly that the researcher owes it to his participants to tell their story accurately. And also the QDA researcher owes it to the participants to tell them what is being told.

This struggle over how the voice is heard and related in research writings is non-existent for the GT researcher. It is all just data to be conceptualized for theory however the data comes. And, as I have said above, it is never advisable or owed for that the GT researcher tells the participants their conceptualized main concern and its continual resolving. The only exception to this is in carefully applied consultations or in action research, when substantive theory is applied for use rather soon after discovery. Remember GT generates categories’ labeling patterns, which is merely about what is going on, not for or against and not for corrective action. People disappear into these patterns which abstract their behavior. GT is not the participant’s voice, it is the patterns of behavior that the voices of many indicate. These patterns fit, work and are relevant to the behavior the voices try to represent.

Put another way, GT substantive theory is not a privileged reporting of the participants voice because the GT researcher was “let in” to confidences. It is a substantive theory explaining voice productions. Participants often recognize the power of the conceptual grab of GT in making sense of the many voices in an action scene when GT is used as consultation. I cannot emphasize enough that the current unleashing of participants’ voices is just more data for GT research. That’s all! GT is voice distortion free.

Whose voice is a worrisome distortion? In “cooperative inquiry” which sounds a bit like participant-observation, the researcher and the participant have deep extended mutual sharing conversations. Interviewing is minimal, in favor of sharing. Thus is the voice a composite of both researcher and participant or more the researcher or the participant. Whose interests are being voiced? Has the study subtly been switched to the researcher’s concerns? Maybe, but if so, then that is what the GT research is studying! It becomes a study of subtle researcher manoeuvring participants, awaredly or unawaredly, and becomes part of the literature on researcher impacting changes on the research scene and its participants.

As educated people, researchers can easily have this distorting effect on less educated people. In cases of this nature, the GT researcher could clearly not know the problem he will study beforehand, and will probably be quite surprised at what emerges. He is likely to find that cooperative inquiry produces properlining, patronizing, unaware projections, cultural and economic dominations and consensus collusions in support of sharing rather than saying it as it is. Listening correctly is subverted by sharing and story competitions.

In contrast, with the preconceived framework to sort out conversations, the QDA researcher may get what he wants from the conversational data. However distorted it may be, he can force it with self determination and an appeal to conviviality. Closeness to the participant does not insure accuracy. In fact one author felt the closer the relationship the more unreliable the data. None of this applies to GT Research which theoretically samples with a myriad of interview relationships, lengths and styles in one research. And then treats all as data.

Cooperative inquiry data will be a challenge to the GT researcher doing secondary analysis of it. He is likely to find

himself in the midst of a methodology research, rather than substantive area. Managed researcher research may be more relevant than the substantive material. It will be like the study of questionnaire response sets in survey research, when responses do not make sense.

Another word about action research is in order. In this case the GT researcher helps the participants do their own and/or share in his research going on in order for them to use purposively the resolving patterns of their main concern. This consciousness in the midst of action has its draw backs. It is hard for the untrained to have this research ability and perceptive-reflexive ability. The tendency is for participants to become defensive over fictions and ineptitudes and to become self-serving in lieu of being fully objective in applications. Also preconceptions easily run ahead of the research, as this is how they think. The need is for the corrective power of a consultant, who puts good judgment and limits on use of the substantive theory. The action oriented participants will perforce be descriptively bias, while the GT researcher is abstractly neutral. This conflict will likely be resolved for the former, since GT neutrality will be unacceptable.

In sum, the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it is laudable. The world of lived reality and situation-specific meanings that constitute the general object of investigation (the “voice”) is thought to be constructed by social actors. The aim of attending carefully to the details, complexity and situated meanings of the everyday life world can be achieved through a variety of QDA methods. But all offer merely the inquirer’s construction of the constructions and meaning interpretations of the participants one studies, nothing more.

Remember, that no matter how different these offerings of data on the “voice”, for the GT researcher it is just data to be submitted to the abstracting of the GT methodology by the constant comparative method. The QDA struggle with worrisome distortions stops at the start of GT research, as distortions of voice are the data. Remember also, that it is just as human to conceptualize to this freedom from time, place and people as it is to somewhat bias descriptions with the wrestle between objective and subjective that takes so many forms. Facts become sacred for the written moment and concepts become easily modified by the next comparative.

Evidentiary

GT relies on constant comparing of incidents to generate categories. Constant comparing saturates categories no matter what the data bias, nor how complete any one interview is. The data one gets is all the data there is. Field notes, observation notes and interview notes are sufficient for GT. They are part of the delimiting aspects of GT data collection.

GT does not produce findings or facts as I have said over and over; it produces conceptual hypotheses. Therefore taping for evidential accuracy in descriptions is an unnecessary waste of time and resources, and restricts theoretical sampling for concept generation. I have written at length about this in "Doing GT".

Thus these statements by one well-known grounded theorist are just plain wrong. "Open-ended interactive telephone interviews were conducted to determine the participants experience of bereavement. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. All interviews were immediately transcribed to ensure the accuracy of the transcription."

Capturing everything by taping in the service of evidentiary accuracy does not reduce data bias. It may increase it, since the best way for a participant to tell a story is to exaggerate it or to engage in extreme relativism to make a point. The GT researcher need only collect data theoretically and let bias emerge. He does not need full coverage per interview or evidence for incidents.

GT research teachers and students learn this lesson gradually with experience. Listen to this teacher from Portugal: "My students used to tape and transcribe the interviews. They give me the transcriptions and we discuss it in the group. Not taping and just doing some notes is tempting. We would gain time and above all we could start doing theoretical sampling. Something we could never do before."

And Wendy Guthrie says: "Some months into the research, I was concerned that I might be missing important pieces of data by relying on memory. I also feared the delayed write-up of field notes might cause me to forget vital information. To guard against these dangers I decided to take a tape recorder with me on my visits. I soon realized that this was not the way forward and discontinued my trial recording. One reason I would not recommend taping is that it gives a false sense of security."

In short, taping does not do away with bias, it might increase it and after all is said, bias is not an issue for GT conceptualization. Complete interviews are not a source of accuracy and both are not needed for GT.

Poor Instrumentation

To be sure poor instrumentation is a source of worrisome data. "All is data" is good as far as it goes. GT in abstracting from data can pick up bias from poor data collection up to a point. I have never seen this point reached, but it can be logically. I have seen unusable data from surveys, when people hired to administer questionnaires, just fill them in themselves to save time and make money.

GT can be used on any data collected by a myriad of methods, so the GT researcher must always be wary of severe collection problems and truly fake data. Overly preconceived frames in a collection method may severely miss the point. This seldom happens. The GT researcher can always ask the question: "Does the sensitivity of the data selection and data collection method match the needs of the research." The answer is mostly "yes" for GT research. The net balance of data collected which is used for secondary analysis is empirical, and becomes part of the research.

Whether secondary analysis or original research GT researchers seem to prefer qualitative data. They prefer deeper understanding data on small samples as opposed to large sample surveys. Thus virtually all of us use interviews, observations, and documents. Some tape record and many do field notes or a combination of both. It is important to always keep instrumentation in mind. There are many forms of interviews in theoretical sampling. They vary from long interviews to quick question shots on the fly. This lack of uniformity does not mean shoddy collection since it not a pretested questionnaire guide. BUT a disastrous interview now and then should be noted in the incident, and is probably part of the data. The interview fits like the emerging theory generated from it. A poor interview should be evaluated in this light, when and if necessary. A poor interview will be picked up by constant comparison with solid collected data.

The same reasoning applies to taking field notes. Most are written either on site or soon after. Waiting a few days to write

field notes does usually deter good notes. But not necessarily. However, deterred field notes also occur on an association basis later on and can be quite good. Constant appraisal of data collection methods is necessary but cursorily easy. Aberrations from emergent patterns are picked up by constant comparison.

Taping interviews can have failures or interim failures. Forgetting to turn on the recorder or poor microphones can wreck data. Tape recorders more than interviews evoke properline data: people tell interviewers what they think the interviewer is suppose to hear. People do not like to worry about negative feedback from recorded conversations. For many QDA researchers this is poor instrument data, because their quest is accurate truths. For the GT researcher properline data is fine. It generates a relevant theory about the fictions of social life. Properline data is a very frequent form of data, which many QDA researchers deny or dislike or take as truth unknowingly.

GT is a theory of method with a view of collection techniques attached. The primary view is “all is data” no matter how collected, which itself may become part of the theory. Collection mix is not relevant until it becomes so. A GT researcher doing original research should choose the best fit collection method. Fit will be a combination of substantive, diplomatic and that allowed by authorities and/or informal culture-structure.

Fact orientation makes instrumentation far more important for QDA research than conceptual orientation of GT research. QDA researchers of different orientations dialogue about the best collection method for claiming accuracy. GT research is collection method neutral, because it can conceptualize any data, which makes it neutral to most poor instrumentation. GT is a general methodology usable on any data, and it is up to the researcher to figure out exactly what the data is.

In sum, the many aspects of GT methodology and its conceptualizing of data, resolve and render moot these many sources of bias descriptions. GT is bias neutral when done properly and when “all is data”. I am sure the reader can think of more sources of bias on the descriptive level that become neutralized by various aspects of GT methodology which

abstracts from time, place and people. The biases mentioned above overlap conceptually but are seen as empirically very separate sources of worrisome data that must be dealt with to some extent.

QDA is a multimethod area of research. No matter what the QDA method used, the research typically begins with the worrisome discussion of the type of data, nature of the data and how its reality is socially constructed with meaning and interpretation. The supposition is that the research will yield a description with “some” kind of accuracy. The QDA researcher justifies why the type of qualitative data is appropriate to study his research problem to ward off critique.

A socially constituted meaning is framed by the preconceived notions of a grand theorist of what accounts for social order. The forcing framework turns research to conjecture however subtle. A professional interest is elaborated. It all sounds so sensible, and to some degree it is, however worrisome the distortions. The aim is not to provide causal explanations of patterned behavior, but to fully describe how members recognize, describe, explain and account for the order of their everyday problems. Descriptions can become unending when forcing an overdue type of qualitative method’s data into a framework that does not delimit the descriptions however bounded the unit and the data collection techniques.

When “all is data” the above QDA quests and efforts do not matter. What matters is exactly what the data is, and then its conceptualization by GT methodology. There is no need to justify a type of data in relation to a problem. As we have seen from above chapters, it all emerges to generate a theory. Accuracy or data distortion is not the issue. Figuring out what the data is and then conceptualizing it is the issue. This occurs with constant comparisons yielding categories. Thus GT is an open methodology, which yields conceptions of patterns from any kind of The theoretical generation and integrations of these conceptions is detailed at length in my other books. The tyrannies of factual description do not occur in GT conceptualization.

Historically there has been a heavy emphasis on quantification in science. Those sciences that lend themselves especially well to quantification are generally known as “hard”. Those less quantifiable sciences, particularly the social sciences

are referred to as “soft” denoting imprecision and lack of dependability. In the last few decades this positivistic position and its beliefs have come under scrutiny: the quantification methods miss the meaning given by the individuals studied. Ergo the growth of several qualitative methods have been employed to contribute this meaning.

No single qualitative method can grasp the subtle variation in ongoing human experience. As a result qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interpretive qualitative methods and always seek better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience that are now being studied. These QDA researches over the years have led to the realization and conclusion that there is no value-free inquiry for studying human experience. Researchers now struggle to develop situational and transcending methods that apply to any qualitative research to reduce the level of worrisome distortion. They wish to record their own observations and interviews accurately while still uncovering the meanings their subjects bring to their action. Their success is asymptotic description accuracy: that is closer and closer to accuracy. The QDA methods compete in their struggle with more and more sophisticated and informed methods. The history of social research is on their side.

Then in 1967 along comes grounded theory, born out of descriptive qualitative research. After a few decades of maturing, it has become clear that GT has left behind the struggles of worrisome qualitative data. By its emergent abstraction or conceptualization of the data to generate a theory that, when applied, explains the very data the QDA researchers are trying to describe. GT transcends QDA research by rendering so many of its sticky struggles moot and thereby presents the next historical stage in social psychological research. It is a highly rigorous abstracting methodology which grounds theory in what is going on whatever the data.