

4 EDITION

Juliet Corbin | Anselm Strauss

Basics of Qualitative Research

Techniques and
Procedures for
Developing
Grounded Theory



Basics of Qualitative Research

*Techniques and Procedures for
Developing Grounded Theory*

Fourth Edition

Juliet Corbin

*International Institute
for Qualitative Methodology*

Anselm Strauss



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
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Basics of Qualitative Research

Fourth Edition

To Anselm

December 16, 1916–September 1996

Scholar and Humanist

Who touched the minds and lives of all who came into contact with him

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Preface

Also at my intellectual core perhaps is the sense that—however naïve you think this is—the world of social phenomena is bafflingly complex. Complexity has fascinated and puzzled me much of my life. How to unravel some of that complexity, to order it, not to be dismayed or defeated by it? How not to avoid the complexity nor distort interpretation of it by oversimplifying it out of existence? This is of course, an old problem: Abstraction (theory) inevitably simplifies, yet to comprehend deeply, to order, some degree of abstraction is necessary. How to keep a balance between distortion and conceptualization? (Strauss, 1993, p. 12)

Since *Basics of Grounded Theory* was first published in 1990, this book has come a long way. When Anselm Strauss and I wrote the first edition of this book it was meant primarily for our own students. We never thought it would attract much of an audience beyond that group. In preparing to write this fourth edition, I went back and looked at some of those earlier editions and was surprised to see how much the book has grown in depth and breadth.

Never fear, the basics of *Basics* have remained the same for each edition. Over the years chapters have been expanded and contracted, been combined and broken apart, all in an effort to make the book easier to read. This edition also is an attempt to make the book more readily understandable to beginning grounded theorists. All of the chapters have been closely examined by me and re-organized with new headings added to each chapter. Parts of each chapter have been rewritten to increase clarity of major concepts. There are additional examples provided in each chapter to illustrate major analytic points especially in regards to analyzing data for context and integration. Some of the denser chapters from the third edition have been broken apart to make it easier for readers to grasp the material they contained. In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, there are new sections on ethics applying that notion to the major points made in those chapters. A new feature, “Insider Insights” short writings from former students and colleagues have been added to chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 to provide readers with optional viewpoints. The emphasis of the book is on analysis. It is not meant to be all-inclusive and for that reason there are suggested readings at the end of each chapter in Part One and in the chapter on writing and doing presentations to fill in areas where the book might be lacking such as with interviewing.

This book has been divided into three parts with a short introduction to each, Parts 1, 2, and 3. The material provided in Part 1 of this book contains the background, the essential procedures, and outlines the steps necessary to construct a grounded theory. Part 2 demonstrates how to apply that material to actual data so that readers can follow the progress of a study from initial data collection to integration. Part 3 is practical in nature. It offers suggestions for writing papers, monographs, dissertations, and doing presentations along with demonstrations of how to write an outline for each. There is a chapter that discusses how to evaluate the quality of one's own and other's grounded theory and a short new section on application of theory to research, teaching, and practice. The final chapter is one devoted to student questions and answers. I want to make it clear to readers that the three parts of the book are not meant to be read separately. The material in the first part of the book is meant to be used in conjunction with the second part with readers going back and forth between a discussion of procedures and demonstration of application of those procedures. Readers can go to Part 3 to find answers to questions posed by other students, questions that they too might have.

Part 1 of this book includes Chapters 1 through 11. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to Strauss's approach to grounded theory. Chapter 2, formerly a part of Chapter 1, now stands alone. It presents the philosophical background for this methodology. In Chapter 3, there are practical considerations for getting started on a grounded theory research project with an additional section on the requirements for the IRB committee. Chapter 4 introduces the notion of analysis and discusses some of its properties. Chapter 5 gets to the heart of analysis by presenting some procedures and techniques for doing analysis. The order of the next 2 chapters Chapters 6 and 7 have been arranged differently from those in the third edition on the advice from reviewers of this book. Chapter 6 on memos and diagrams now follows Chapter 5. Chapter 7 on theoretical sampling follows. It discusses theoretical sampling, a specialized form of data gathering particular to grounded theory. Chapters 8 and 9 formerly one chapter are separated now with Chapter 8 explaining the importance of locating major concepts in context and Chapter 9 emphasizing the relevance of bringing process into the analysis when constructing theory. Chapter 10 discusses integration—the final step in theory construction. Part 1 concludes with a new chapter, Chapter 11, a brief chapter on the use of computer data analysis programs in qualitative research.

Throughout Part 2, I'll be working with different types of data, including interviews, memoirs, and historical materials. Each chapter has been cut back somewhat for this edition. Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of analysis. In Chapter 12, the emphasis is on concept identification or open coding. In Chapter 13, the emphasis is on concept elaboration. In Chapter 14, the focus is on analyzing data for context a form of axial coding. Chapter 15 explains how to bring process into the analysis and Chapter 16 demonstrates integration. Readers of this text will notice that for teaching purposes I break analysis down to its major elements. I acknowledge that analysis is more complex than these breakdowns imply because persons' thought processes are more complex. As analysts are breaking data down, they are also noting relationships. As they are delineating concepts, they are also identifying properties and dimensions. Throughout the analytic process, they are working

toward integration. The breakdowns are made so that novices can put a name on what they do and be somewhat systematic and at the same time flexible about their analyses.

A research study is not complete until it is critiqued and made available to others. This final part of the book, Part 3, deals with practical matters related to evaluation and publication. Chapter 17 offers suggestions for preparing dissertations and monographs, writing papers, and doing presentations. Chapter 18 presents criteria that can be used by grounded theorists to evaluate the quality of their own work, theses and dissertation committees and granting agencies and readers of grounded theory studies to evaluate the quality of the studies. It also includes a new section on applying one's theory to research, teaching, and practice. Chapter 19 responds to questions often posed by students and other researchers regarding grounded theory. We hope that these sections provide a fit conclusion to the book.

Most of all, this book remains a tribute to Anselm Strauss and the legacy he has left behind. It has been an honor and joy to write and his memory remains buried deep in these pages.

Juliet Corbin

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SAGE was founded in 1965 by Sara Miller McCune to support the dissemination of usable knowledge by publishing innovative and high-quality research and teaching content. Today, we publish more than 750 journals, including those of more than 300 learned societies, more than 800 new books per year, and a growing range of library products including archives, data, case studies, reports, conference highlights, and video. SAGE remains majority-owned by our founder, and after Sara's lifetime will become owned by a charitable trust that secures our continued independence.

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