and perhaps of real importance was brought to light. In both areas, patients’ responses generally expressed affirmative interest. Nonwhite members were more apt to be “very much” interested in both areas than the white members. Within the context of positive responses nonwhite members had more enthusiastic interest in Mothers’ Classes than in reading materials. The primiparous patients tended to express greater interest in reading materials than did the multiparous members: while the multiparas were slightly more supportive than the primiparas of the Mothers’ Classes.

The waiting room time was thought to be a good time for group activity by 92 per cent of the mothers. The two negative responses were made by primiparous patients. When number of visits was considered, whether the first or return visit, there was 100 per cent favorable response from those patients making their first visit to the clinic for this pregnancy.

Thus, the use of waiting room time for group activity appeared to be regarded favorably by both racial groups, both parity groups, and by first and return visit patients.

Summary. Systematic observation of 31 mothers attending an antepartum clinic revealed that most of the patients spend from 45 minutes to one hour in the waiting room and most spent this waiting time doing nothing. A questionnaire survey of 50 white and nonwhite expectant mothers attending the same clinic found that the clinic visit represented a major investment by patients. Also considerable interest in such waiting room activities as Mothers’ Classes or other group discussion and reading of both general and health-related literature was shown. The findings suggested that, in this particular

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In The Discovery of Grounded Theory, Glaser and Strauss present the viewpoint and the theoretical formulation for the field methodology used in The Awareness of Dying (Chicago, Aldine Publishing Co., 1965). A Time for Dying (Chicago, Aldine Publishing Co., to be published), and Jeanne C. Quint’s The Nurse and the Dying Patient (New York, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1967). They are concerned with the discovery of theory from empirical data which they term “grounded theory.” A cogent argument for the appropriateness and necessity of developing theory relevant to research is put forth. The importance of verification of theory is not negated; but rather, it is presented in a perspective differing from most current sociological thought. A source of appeal and controversy as well lies in the authors’ proposal to develop grounded theory prior to moving on to the steps of verification. The proposal is made explicitly for sociology but is equally relevant for nursing. The issue of generating “grounded” theory has implications for the direction of nursing research, the content of nursing theory, and the applicability of theory to practice.

Emphasis is placed on theory as a means of interpretation, for it is an ever developing entity and is not a perfected product. The elements of theory which are generated are first, conceptual categories and their conceptual properties; and second, hypotheses. Centes and their properties are distinguished from each other but there is a systematic relationship between these two elements of theory. They differ in their level of conceptual abstraction, with the category occupying the higher level. Both categories and properties are concepts indicated by the data but they are not the data.

The type of concept that should be generated has two essential features. First, the concepts should be “analytic,” that is, sufficiently generalized to designate characteristics of concrete entities, not the entities themselves. Secondly, they should be “sensitizing,” yielding a meaningful picture, and accompanied by illustrations that enable one to grasp the reference in terms of one’s own experience.

The hypotheses generated are relations among the categories and their properties. As categories and properties emerge, develop in abstraction, and become related, their accumulating interrelations form an integrated central theoretical framework. This framework forms the core of the emerging theory.

Glaser and Strauss state grounded theory should then be used as the basis from which to develop grounded formal theory. Some general rules for advancing grounded theory to formal theory are given and the importance and usefulness of formal theory is discussed.

The generation of theory, coupled with the notion of “theory as process,” involves a “process of research” all along. This process requires that the three operations of collection, coding, and analysis of data, be carried out jointly. Two methods used in conducting the process of research are described. The first is “theoretical sampling” which focuses on the relations between data collection and analysis while implying considerable coding. The second is “constant comparative analysis,” describing the relationship between joint coding and analysis as data are collected.

Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the researcher jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what comparison group to collect data on next and where to find that group. The purpose of theoretical sampling is to develop the theory as it emerges. The basic criterion governing the selection of comparison groups is their theoretical relevance for furthering the development of emerging categories. Group comparisons are conceptual. They are made by comparing diverse or similar evidence indicating the same
conceptual categories and properties. Comparison groups provide control over individual level and population scope as well as providing simultaneous maximization or minimization of the differences and the similarities of data that bear on the categories being studied. The criterion for judging when to stop sampling the different groups pertinent to a category is the category's "theoretical saturation." Saturation means that no additional data are being found whereby properties of the category can be developed.

The second method to be used in the process of research is the constant comparative method. The purpose of this method of joint coding and analysis is to generate theory more systematically by using explicit coding and analytic procedures. Authors suggest that a researcher is concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting many categories, properties, and hypotheses about general problems. It is not designed to generate "ideal type" categories that two researchers working independently with the same data would produce the same results. It is designed to allow for some of the flexibility that aids the creative generation of theory. Since no proof is involved, the method only requires differentiation of data and not consideration of all available data. Glaser and Strauss describe the role of using the constant comparative method in the following four steps: 1) comparing incidents applicable to each category; 2) integrating categories and their properties; 3) delimiting the theory; and 4) writing the theory.

Keeping with the theme of the generation of theory, the possibilities for using a variety of sources of data and elaborating on quantitative data are discussed. The researcher must use his imagination to locate and draw from documentary sources. A presentation of a few guidelines for discovering theory from quantitative data is also given, with the implication that quantification need not stifle creativity or discoveries.

"Credibility" in the theory can be conveyed by getting the reader to understand the theoretical framework and describing the data vividly. Data presented as evidence for conclusions indicates how the researcher obtained the theory from his data. The reader's judgment of credibility will rest upon his assessments of how the researcher came to his conclusions.

The practical application of grounded theory requires developing a method for the method of coding and analyzing properties. The first is that the theory must closely "fit" the substantive area in which it will be used. Second, it must be clearly "understandable" by laymen concerned with this area. Third, it must be sufficiently "general" to be applicable to a multitude of diverse situations within the substantive area, not just to a specific type of situation. Fourth, the researcher must allow for a "partial control" over the structure and process of daily situations. Glaser and Strauss propose that theory, developed through the use of the research process described, will incorporate these four properties. This theory will therefore be usable in the practical situation.

One of the stimulating aspects of The Discovery of Grounded Theory is the presentation of a codified methodology for field research. There are few such theoretical models for field designs. Since the developed theory should be applicable to practice, the method appears to be an intriguing one for nursing research. Certain conditions would have to be taken into account, however, in the use of the method in exploratory nursing studies. The general problems of applying a sociological method to nursing research and choice of appropriate study design become relevant here. Sociology's field of inquiry characteristic deals with many units of analysis and few dimensions of analysis or variables. For those nursing problems which also have this characteristic, the constant comparative method may be applied. But for those studies concerned with few units and many variables, as is the case with a small sample examined in depth, difficulties are presented in attempting to translate the terminology and techniques to handle small variations. In addition, the use of theoretical sampling would require that the investigator(s) had extensive time and resources which are not always available for nursing studies. An invitation is extended to other researchers to publish the methods they have used in order to further the conceptualization of methods to develop theory. The authors' own book provides a rich resource for those concerned with qualitative research and the development of theory.

—Elizabeth Strutzel, New Haven, Connecticut.


This study was designed to determine the content for inservice education as perceived by registered nurses employed in 24 general, short-term hospitals in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Questionnaires were administered to 1,102 nurses, approximately one-fourth of the nurses employed by the hospitals. In addition to biographical data, nurses were asked to describe the most critical incident in nursing which they had experienced within the year and which was considered to have been caused by a lack of preparation. Nurses were also asked to state a learning need which would contribute most to the improvement of the quality of patient care. The critical incident reports revealed that 55 per cent were related to direct care of patients, 44 per cent involved indirect care activities. The incidents related by respondents fell into major groupings, some of which fall within the usual inservice program areas.

Eleven per cent of the nurses reported a need for further information concerning disease conditions and medications. The author points out that provisions could be made for groups of hospitals to share in this type of ongoing education. Other learning needs identified by the respondents were categorized as orientation, skill training, and leadership, interpersonal relations, and communications.

The study involved registered nurses from all levels, staff nurses to clinical supervisors. Unfortunately the study sample included only 10 per cent who worked a part-time schedule.

The author makes recommendations for inservice education worthy of consideration by those concerned with this important activity.—Esther M. Thompson, Director of Graduate Studies, Department Nursing, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York.