

Epilogue

FAQs and Conversations

[I] have come to this project to understand what it means to know more than we are able to know and to write toward what we don't understand.

—Lather (1999:152)

Situational analysis offers a new mode of doing grounded theory complementary and supplementary to the traditional approach focused on generating basic social processes. I have argued that new modes are requisite to push grounded theory around the postmodern turn and release it from remaining fetters of positivism toward a richer, more densely analytic constructionism. Situational analysis is itself grounded in Anselm Strauss's social worlds/arenas/discourse framework as an alternative conceptual infrastructure to that of basic social processes of action.

Situational analysis is an advanced qualitative method proposing innovations to an established, highly valued approach. It responds in part to some of the extensive critiques of that approach. I therefore explicitly framed the methodological innovations vis-à-vis both social theory and the history of grounded theory. I asserted that in its Straussian formulations, grounded theory and symbolic interactionism have constituted a theory/methods package that undergirds constructionist interpretive and analytic work. I then followed in Foucault's footsteps around the postmodern turn to explicitly push grounded theory and situational analysis beyond "the knowing subject" toward studies of extant narrative, visual, and historical discourses that increasingly permeate social life on the planet.

Pursuing situational analysis involves the making and analyzing of three kinds of maps—situational, social worlds/arenas, and positional maps—as

means of opening up and analyzing data cartographically, emphasizing relationality and positionality. Like traditional grounded theory, it relies deeply on coding, theoretical sampling, seeking saturation, and extensive memoing. Unlike traditional grounded theory, it seeks to specify and map all of the important human and nonhuman elements in the situation of inquiry broadly conceived, the social worlds and arenas that organize the situation at the meso level of collective discourse and action, and the discursive positions taken and not taken in the situation, especially vis-à-vis debated and contested issues. To accomplish this, situational analysis makes demands on the reflexivity, accountability, and theoretical and substantive knowledges of the researcher.

Also largely unlike traditional grounded theory, situational analysis of extant narrative, visual, and historical discourses within the situation of inquiry are strongly encouraged, as well as ethnographic and interview projects. To facilitate entrée into the established worlds of discourse analysis, I provided introductory overviews of each of those territories—narrative, visual, and historical. Both short examples and lengthy exemplars of doing situational analysis with all the different genres of data were given.

Situational analysis also pushes researchers toward more reflexive and considered research design from the outset of a project. Because we now have a century of social science behind us that has already explored many if not most of the interesting sites of inquiry more or less, thorough literature reviews in advance of research are very strongly encouraged. These are undertaken in order both to avoid reinventing the wheel (one more study of X is *not* enough to make a serious academic or applied career) and to position the research project at the cutting edge of the substantive area as well as vis-à-vis contemporary theoretical engagements. The literature review should, moreover, help specify the heterogeneous forms of extant data that could be selected to address the topic of inquiry, allowing the researcher to pursue the less explored, to follow Strauss's injunction: "Study the unstudied!" Last, and very important to some, "In practice, you are unlikely to obtain research funding without having carried out a thorough literature review or having formulated some idea of the content of the data you are likely to collect" (Barbour 2001:115-117). This is increasingly true for both doctoral student as well as faculty research.

I have used, indeed leaned heavily upon, the metaphor of coming around the postmodern turn in this book. The power of postmodernism lies in its flexibility (Denzin 1996c:343-344), and I have argued here and elsewhere (Clarke 1991) that social worlds/arenas/discourses approaches as both analytic frame and root metaphor are similarly flexible. If empirical work is to move toward rather than away from difference(s) and complexities—to me,

the heart of the postmodern project—we need tools that enable us to see difference(s), handle them analytically, and rerepresent them in fathomable ways that can travel. The various situational mapping strategies themselves offer means of translation across worlds. They offer symbolic vocabularies that can speak many languages. They (attempt to) speak the languages of those studied and to see the world through their perspective(s), as well as those of others, including those of researchers themselves as accountable and reflexive participants in joint endeavors to produce new knowledge. They attend to the nonhuman elements shaping and conditioning lived situations.

I have argued here for constructionist grounded theory and situational analyses that offer analytics and theorize rather than build formal theory. To me, the era of grand or formal theory is long over. Theorizing suffices in the postmodern moment. Theorizing invokes sensitizing concepts: “Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, *sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look*” (Blumer 1969:147-148; emphasis added). Life on the planet is changing too quickly to claim permanence much less transcendence.

Across the disciplines today, literally millions of people are engaged in doing research and theorizing. This figure was likely in the thousands when grounded theory was originally formulated in 1967. Moreover, after a century of sustained and expanding work, the social sciences have gone far beyond the old disciplinary formations to include postcolonial, queer, diasporic, cultural, feminist, visual, disability, gender, and a host of other “studies.” Today, sites of new knowledge production are increasingly (if not at all adequately as yet) recognized as global, distributed all over the planet (Canagarajah 2002). Situations of inquiry are stunningly heterogeneous. The very differences and complexities that situational analysis is intentionally designed to address are everywhere with us. Situational analysis is also pliant and flexible in ways that allow researchers to address the constraints, opportunities, and distinctive resources posed in their particular situations of inquiry. A good interpretive analysis of the situation of inquiry ideally produces new working sensitizing concepts or elaborates and refines old ones, integrates theoretical advances with grounded empirical work, and is explicitly located, situated, and historicized. It should also ultimately be useful in the world in some ways, capable of demonstrating its pragmatist roots.

At the end of Chapter 1, I offered a chart that mapped the directions in which I sought to push grounded theory around the postmodern turn via situational analysis. Here at the end of the book is a chart (Figure E.1) that summarizes the main areas of difference and similarity between traditional grounded theory and constructionist grounded theory and situational analysis.

TRADITIONAL GROUNDED THEORY	CONSTRUCTIONIST GROUNDED THEORY AND SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS
Positivist/realist	Constructionist/relativist
Master narrative	Modest contribution
“Knowing subjects”: Interview and ethnographic data	“Knowing subjects” and extant discourses: Interview, ethnographic, narrative, visual, and historical discourse data
Universal truths and generalizations	Partial perspectives and situated knowledges
Simplification; difference as “negative cases”	Range of variation; differences and complexities as analytically central
Normativity/“normal curve”	Cartography/positionality
Researcher as tabula rasa	Researcher as knowledgeable about theory and substantive area
Literature review after analysis well under way/ complete	Thorough literature review prior to/part of project design
Project planning	Intensive and ongoing project design
Intensive grounded theory coding	Intensive grounded theory coding and situational maps and analysis
Theoretical sampling	Theoretical sampling
Theoretical sensitivity a goal	Theoretical sensitivity a goal
One basic social process and subprocesses	Multiple possible social processes and subprocesses possible
Substantive theory	Situational maps and analyses, social worlds/arenas maps and analyses, positional discourse maps and analyses
Formal theory	Substantive theorizing Sensitizing concepts and theorizing
Authority of author as expert	Accountability of author as reflexive viz. research processes and products

Figure E.1 From Traditional Grounded Theory to Constructionist Grounded Theory and Situational Analysis

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

[W]e do need an earthwide network of connections, including the ability to partially translate knowledges among very different—

and power-differentiated—communities . . . in order to have a chance for a future.

—Haraway (1991b:187)

Approaches to methods tend to generate a lot of questions. I have, of course, tried to anticipate many of these in the previous chapters. I have also made an epilogue of FAQs and conversations provoked by students and colleagues.

Perhaps it would be better to stop doing social science research altogether?

Given the history of the social sciences and their contributions to producing and legitimating inequalities, this is a fundamental question (e.g., Cameron et al. 1999:142). It is a question I have debated with myself and others for many years, most especially as I began this book in 1995. Then, through deeply important conversations with Patti Lather, Katie King, and Kit Chesla, I was able to retire this question to the sidelines for the following reasons. Whether or not I contribute, the research machine—the vast and increasingly global technologies of knowledge production—will keep on turning (Spivak 1993). My hope is to shift the directions of that turning a bit. My interventions explicitly seek to challenge the status quo of research as focused on commonalities-as-core, to rupture the taken-for-grantedness of the normal curve, and instead to place differences, complexities, and silences at the analytic core. I hope to legitimate simultaneously attending to the social as well as to individual voices, to the nonhuman as well as to the human, and to producing further analytics of the discursive and interactive practices of power.

My “good” intentions can, of course, be perverted for other purposes. My interventions can, of course, be used to improve the panopticon’s ability to monitor, assess, and discipline. We can and should, of course, struggle against this. Ultimately, as researchers, we need to continually assess the situations in which we pursue research and return again and again to the fundamental questions: Perhaps it would be better to stop doing this project? Who/what might be endangered by my doing this? And, perhaps I should stop doing social science research altogether?

What do you see as some theoretical issues and concerns here?

An excellent question. My major concern is that I may be read as appropriating the postmodern on behalf of the high/late modern—pushing around the *mostmodern* turn rather than the *postmodern* turn. Patti Lather gave me

the words to express this in her comments, for which I am grateful. That is, I know I will get feedback that I have gone much too far and feedback that I have not gone far enough. I am only worried about the latter, and there are several specific issues.

First, there is, I believe, inadequate understanding or even language for what I call here “the social”—spaces beyond individuals that are meaning making and world making. The situational maps and social worlds/arenas maps thus risk being read as more structural and modern analytically. Yet I am far from alone in seeing a deeper and broader understanding of the social per se as postmodern, as central to postmodernity, including issues of globalization and how things travel. To me, this is what Foucault was *about*, and hence my use of his work. Katovich and Reese (1993) raised this point about Strauss postmodernizing the social through grounded theory.

In situational analysis, it is the concept of the situation itself and the concrete practices of making the various maps and analyses that constitute a new post-structuralist/postmodern approach to inquiry. A “situation” is itself open, indeterminate, changing, unstable, unfixed, tenuous, temporary. The maps can only be understood as analytic snapshots in time and space. I further see the social as central to the postmodern in situational analysis in that such indeterminacy and contingency are foregrounded, and attention centers on the *organizational*, *institutional*, and discursive *relationalities* rather than on *organizations* and *institutions* per se. Local differences and hybridities are featured.

Moreover, precisely because of its empirical/conceptual elasticity and porous boundaries, I also see the social worlds/arenas/discourses framework as postmodern. Through actually using it with empirical materials, its fluidities, indeterminacies, and serious instabilities become apparent. Then those very traits tend to make analysts anxious—actually an appropriate postmodern state! Analyzing extant discourses also works to decenter human agency in postmodern fashion, as does taking the nonhuman seriously. I am seeking to create postmodern spaces to articulate the social in research sites that can show its workings without having to carry the heavy weight and determinisms of received structural theory, but also with a stronger sense of history than usually borne by network and related poststructural theories. I suspect I will keep working on this for some time.

A second area of concerns centers on how differences, complexities, variations, silences, race, ethnicities, class, sex/gender, sexualities, (dis)abilities, and so on are handled in this book and in the situational analyses that it helps to produce. On the one hand, I worry about essentializing differences, reinscribing universalizing tendencies in the effort to challenge them: “In making room for something else to come about, how do we stop confining the other within the same?” (Lather 2001a:219). How do we speak of the

particularities? On the other hand, I worry because “[t]he danger is to steal knowledge from others, particularly those who have little else, and use it for the interests of power” (Lather 2001a:221). I am banking a lot on the power of the positional maps as helping to work against such tendencies: their uncoupling of persons and groups from positions; their documentation of the multiplicity of positions, including contradictions; and perhaps most, their capacity to articulate the sites of silence, unoccupied positions. A method that does this can yank us around the postmodern turn—ready or not.

Last, I have written in several places here about the dark edges of the postmodern—or the darkness of the abyss at the edge—and people’s (including my own) fears of falling off that edge into spaces where the very value of living is routinely questioned. In some senses, I have written reassuringly—that one can go to the edge and not fall off. But living in the United States at this historical moment feels like living at the bottom of the abyss. Not only because of this, but also because of it and for other reasons, I am beginning to understand the need to come to terms with the abyss as part of how one does come around the postmodern turn. Perhaps one does need to decide whether to do anything at all before one can do research after the postmodern.

For solace, I keep returning to this comment by Veyne (1971/1997:159): “[W]e cannot help but take a moment to breathe a melancholy sigh over the human condition, over the poor unconscious and absurd things that we are, over the rationalizations that we fabricate for ourselves and whose object seems to be chortling.”

In Chapter 2 and elsewhere you discuss the importance of Foucault's work to situational analyses, yet you use interactionist language. Why?

I use the Straussian terminology because I believe it is more helpful in grounding situational analyses in both the interactionist concept of the situation and the Straussian social worlds/arenas/discourses framework, the conceptual infrastructures of this approach. I want to be able to see the grounding in actions and practices *in addition to* the Foucaultian flows of power in discourses. More specifically, I find that research describing flows and circulations of things and power too often (though certainly not always) glosses over particulars—glosses over what is going on in the situation and leaves it un(der)analyzed. Flows and circulations are of considerable import, but I *also* and particularly want to “feel” the drag of history and “see” what is being dragged along, the sites of traction and sources of friction. The point is not either/or but both/and. I think the Straussian language pushes that analytic further and makes the linkages between grounded theory and

situational analysis clearer. But I am also happy to and do routinely use concepts from Foucault, Haraway, Deleuze, Gramsci, Hall, Star, Appadurai, Lather, Latour, Bowker, Rapp, Spivak, and many others. Concepts are the tools of scholarship, and situational analysis encourages both the generation of new and the creative use of extant sensitizing concepts.

How would you map the classic concepts of structure and process and the issues of agency onto situational analysis as compared to the conditional matrix?

Strauss refused the structure/process binary, and I do as well, though I do use terms such as *structural*, *processual*, *micro*, *meso*, and *macro*. To me, these are matters of analytic emphasis and we need the language to point with—to specify *how* we are emphasizing. *Structures are frozen processes/means of relating and organizing practices. Melting happens.* In Latour's words (1991), "Technology is society made durable," and we well know how quickly and consequently technologies change. All the new mapping alternatives framed here are *simultaneously* structural and processual, ultimately working against this binary. Most fundamentally, like pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, they are antideterministic vis-à-vis causality. There are no one-way arrows, but instead attempts to delineate processes of coconstitution through specifying conditions and relationalities. Situational analysis works against the structure/process binary by promoting analysis of the situated conditions of action and discursive representation. *Situations, then, are particular configurations of conditions—temporal, geographic, interactional, sentimental, and so on.* Structure/process is constitutive and, in Foucault's terminology, *are* the practices of discourse, existing in and through practices per se, constituting "conditions of possibility" in particular situations.

These questions also revisit the problematics of agency. By explicitly taking the nonhuman into account in situational analysis, we displace "the knowing/agentive subject." Agency is reformulated into something messy, "sticky," and "distributed" (Dumit 1997; see also Law 1999), varyingly animating all the elements that constitute a particular situation. But most important, agency is no longer a "property" of persons or groups, but instead is fluid, situational, and contingent—to be conditionally analyzed rather than assumed, much like the positivities of power in Foucaultian approaches.

The main difference between the conditional matrix and situational analysis is that the conditional matrix placed the conditions of actions *outside* the action (see Chapter 2 for diagrams). In very sharp contrast, situational analysis places both actions and conditions *inside the situation* and demands analysis of the *situation as a whole*. There are strong echoes

here of the ways in which “Blumer embraced Mead’s belief that reality exists *as* situations in relation to one another” (Morrione 1998:198). If social life can be conceptualized as an overlappingly layered mosaic of social worlds, arenas, and discourses in constant movement, it can also be conceived as an overlappingly layered mosaic of situations open to analysis.

*Why is another form of grounded theory needed at all?
Isn’t this diluting grounded theory instead of enriching it?*

I have several responses. First and foremost for me, the Straussian conditional matrix failed to adequately situate the phenomenon of interest. While I wholly endorse its conditionality (the relentless specifying of “under what conditions” does X happen), the specificities of the conditional elements were/are not enough. Situational analysis was developed and this book written to address this fundamental problem in grounded theory, and also to do so poststructurally, acknowledging and incorporating varied insights of the postmodern turn. Second, while grounded theory had been used with discursive materials, including using grounded theory to construct the categories for content analysis, this was rare. I seek to promote grounded theory and situational analysis of extant discourses, decentering the knowing subject as relentlessly as conditions have been specified.

Third, I have been deeply disturbed by how few self-proclaimed grounded theory studies take the situation into account. Many if not most do not even take up the conditional matrix with any degree of analytic seriousness. They do not even specify where in the world they did the research or when in history it was done. The “unconditional present” suffices for them. Not for me. The time has come to be much more explicit in situating one’s research—temporally, geographically, and so on. Not to do so today reeks of unacknowledged imperialism. It is quite challenging to adequately situate research, and I think situational analysis can be particularly helpful here as more global aspects of situations would appear as elements *in* the situation and need to be analyzed as such.

*There are many kinds of mapmaking
strategies already in existence. Why create another?*

Yes, of course. But none are linked to grounded theory as a mode of qualitative data analysis. Situational analysis was created by Strauss (social worlds/arenas maps) and me (situational maps and positional maps), and shares epistemological roots in Meadian and Blumerian interactionisms and (especially Foucaultian) poststructuralisms. Other kinds of mapping strategies (e.g., clustering, cognitive, conceptual modeling) may have different

epistemological/ontological roots and do other kinds of work in the world. They are beyond my scope here and I leave it to others to compare them.

Historically, developing a basic social process through grounded theory was done through narratives. What differences does mapping make in the process?

Doing situational maps can work like narrative storytelling as a mode of generating analysis. Having a working analysis group helps, of course. One of Strauss's great gifts was in listening forth stories. In our working analysis groups, Anselm would sit back, get comfortable, bend his head down a bit, peer over his glasses, and say to the individual who was up that day, "So, tell us, what is this a story of?" The heretofore mute voice of the novice analyst would then use the most familiar of narrative forms to unblock analytic paralysis: "This is a story about . . ." To get someone going, I can remember our joking: "Okay, okay! Once upon a time . . ." Stories are a special genre. They are not lists of codes or categories. They are not frequencies. They are not decontextualized intellectual objects. Nor are maps. Anybody can tell a story or draw a quick and dirty map and talk about it.

Maps and stories both "cohere." They have threads that can be woven together—however unevenly and episodically. Their patterns end up linking codes, categories, themes, and other elements that become an analysis. Maps and stories are just different fabrics of life. You do not have to be a high theorist to tell a story or make a map. You just need a place to begin and a place to go that includes some interesting sites and observations along the way. In the presence of a skilled listener or alone at the computer, one can comfortably and informally learn the art of pulling fractured data and relational maps into analytic codes and categories, producing a new analytic story. Mapping provokes analysis in similar ways to the "once upon a time" narrative strategy. While grounded theory initially did not push making diagrams, Strauss later did so. One can read such diagrams as maps just as one can read situational maps as diagrams (see also Soulliere, Britt, & Maines 2001). Analysis is the goal.

You have noted that situational analysis is likely to be used across many disciplines. What do you worry about when methods travel? Is special attention to epistemology needed?

Borrowing both theory and methods across disciplines and interdisciplines is requisite and common practice today. There can be no disciplinary ownership of theory and methods that travel well. Crucially, however, this does not mean divorcing a method from its epistemology/ontology.

Epistemology/ontology constitutes the bedrock, the foundation of a method, rather than the precepts of the particular discipline in which it is being utilized. Situational analysis is clearly and deeply rooted in the epistemologies and ontologies of symbolic interactionism, pragmatist philosophy, and Foucaultian discourse analysis. This is a theory/methods package (see Chapter 1). My extended attention to theory in this book itself demonstrates this.

But researchers may well want to pull in concepts from elsewhere, tweak a map to do some other kind of work. The issue then becomes making things very explicit. As Riessman (2002:706) has stated: “Some fancy epistemological footwork is required. . . . [Borrowing and/or] [c]ombining methods forces investigators to confront troublesome philosophical issues and to educate readers about them.” That is, such philosophical problems deserve to be put on the table/discussed in our books and papers. We may well not be able to “solve” them, but coming to terms with the limits, constraints, and partialities they may place on our analyses is important reflexive work.

This does not mean that grounded theory and situational analysis cannot be used for quite disciplinary projects. They certainly can. Disciplines are, in essence, ways of organizing questions about the world. Some questions become canonic: such as the nature, meanings, and practices of culture in anthropology; the nature, meanings, and practices of social order in sociology; the nature, meanings, and practices of caring for nursing; the nature, meanings, and practices of learning for educators; the nature, meanings, and practices of space for geography. Such questions are canonic precisely because they are worth revisiting over time as ways of rethinking disciplines. Using new tools such as situational analysis to analyze such questions can be provocative.

As scholars, we are also participants in constructing discourses as well as being constituted through them. We are parts of the knowledge production machinery that circles the globe that also constitutes inequalities in what counts as knowledge, whose knowledge can count, which knowledge can become canonic, and so on. There is *A Geopolitics of Academic Writing* (Canagarajah 2002) that centralizes some and marginalizes others. We need to attend to this more seriously as our belated understandings of globalization reshape our understanding of the workings of global knowledge machines. There is no place to stand outside of discourse(s) *including our own*.

Recently it has been argued that grounded theory is particularly good for use in third-world sites (Samik-Ibrahim 2000). Is the same true of situational analysis?

Even more so. Precisely *because* situational analysis specifies the elements of the situation itself, it can be used in many and heterogeneous situations to

provide greater clarity *about that particular situation*. Moreover, the reasons for doing research are often to decide how to intervene in a particular situation to improve conditions of some kind. Knowing the key elements in the situation—the specific configuration of *local* conditions—would be very useful. Doing situational analysis produces flexible working maps of local conditions. To boot, grounded theory and situational analysis are cheap to do. The researchers' time, energy, and transport if needed, possibly along with some transcription and copying costs, are the main expenses. Situational analysis, because it engages the researcher more explicitly in project design issues from the outset, can improve the utility of grounded theory where traveling is difficult and return research trips highly unlikely.

Some years ago I had the pleasure of having several nurses from Botswana in my qualitative research courses, and it is through them and their doctoral work that I have engaged these traveling issues. Seboni, Shaibu, and Seloilwe have pursued several grounded theory studies there.¹ In small team field research projects, they collected data during the day, coded and analyzed it together during the evening, and then decided what else they needed to do and what additional data to gather before moving to the next field site on the following day. One of the projects concerned health needs assessments across a wide and very geographically diverse region. This involved not only learning what people needed and wanted to address those needs but also making sure that whatever the intervention was, it would work in the *specific local situation*. This is particularly important in designing interventions when funding is scarce. For example, in some areas, access to clean water was problematic, but not in others—a major difference in situation. Situational maps and analysis feature making such differences explicit.

Seboni, Shaibu, and Seloilwe also commented to me later that the dialogic approach of grounded theory—the goings back and forth between researchers and the people they were studying—was culturally insisted upon in Botswana because there was little or no prior experience of research there. It was not yet an “interview culture” (Gubrium & Holstein 2002). This meant that they themselves were actively interrogated and challenged as part of the field research process, for which they were at least somewhat prepared by our analysis groups. Working with these nurses pushed me further into creating situational analysis precisely because the specific conditions in their situations were strange to me. I could see the different conditions better—and see the value of the situation as a whole as the unit of analysis more clearly. I hope to hear from researchers who use situational analysis across many different situations about both the pleasures and problems of doing so. (The situational analysis Web site will include such users' accounts. See www.sagepub.com/clarke and www.situationalanalysis.com.)

Have you considered constructing a computer program that would facilitate doing situational analysis, especially the maps?

Yes, and I hope this can happen. Meanwhile, all the maps printed in this book were originally done with the basic techniques of Microsoft Word, so it is certainly possible to do them easily without a special program. But let me also say that there are clear and present dangers of using specialized programs. The obvious danger is of using the method formulaically—filling in the blanks and using the initial outcomes as terminal analyses. But there are also ways in which computerized programs are too neat. You have to put things here and not there, and it can take much good energy and time to get it to the “right” place in virtual space that you might want to change in 2 minutes. It is hard *not* to get lost in doing the program rather than doing the analysis, especially if you are an anxious analyst. Pencil and paper will remain useful, and best of all are working analysis groups.

This is an odd book. It has a lot of theory and a lot of method—perhaps too much of both.

Yes, it is an odd book, but it is the book it needed to be. It is a book that can push a grounded theory grounded in symbolic interactionism around the postmodern turn and explain the whys and wherefores as well as all the how-tos. All methods are theory/methods packages (Star 1989)—usually with the theory left out or only tacitly acknowledged. (This, of course, is a key source of the hegemony of positivism—it has been constructed to appear theoryless/atheoretical.) But if one sets out to change an established method or to expand it in new directions as I have done here, the theoretical and epistemological rationales for doing so need to be made clear.

In this case in particular, because grounded theory is so very popular and has traveled all over the planet, the whys and wherefores especially need to be discussed. Thousands of people have used grounded theory and thought about it intently as they did so and subsequently. There are many critiques of grounded theory. In fact, it was my agreement with many of these critiques that in part stimulated me to develop situational analysis. Many critics will understand exactly what I am up to. For example, over dinner with a French colleague who studies the history of Chicago sociology and its methods, I explained situational analysis in a couple of paragraphs. Without my mentioning the words, he leaped in and said, “Oh, you’re going to fix the conditional matrix!” Quite. And, I hope, more.

“FAQs and Conversations about Situational Analysis” will be continued on the book’s Web site found through www.sagepub.com/clarke or www.situationalanalysis.com.

Final Words

The most important thing I have learned is the doubled need for hope when the languages of hope that we have are no longer broadly persuasive.

—Lather (1999:143)

Action is not enough. We need analytic maps to plot positions and their relative locations. We need improved methods for grasping the constructions of terrain—altitudes, topographies, scales, textures, and so on. One key property of new world orders is a shift from national to new and different transnational configurations and social formations. Another key property is travel—most everything travels and there is much traffic, movement, dis/re/ordering. We need maps. We need to methodologically simultaneously address actors in action and reflection and extant discursive constructions of human and nonhuman actors and positions and their implications. We need cartographies of the vast wealth of discourses—narrative, visual, and historical—in which we are constantly awash. This is not to say that splendid studies have not been produced through analyzing basic social processes. They have been and will be. Nor do I seek to end or replace processual approaches and action analyses using grounded theory. I do seek to address situational analyses to multiple audiences.

Many questions remain: How can we talk about research practices without doing premature closure? How can we better allow entrée into our work from multiple disciplinary as well as inter/transdisciplinary sites? How can we increase the circumference of the visible/knowable in new pedagogies for the transdisciplinary research classroom? How can we adequately map and represent the nonhuman in our situations of concern without reification? How can we have perspective and best represent others' perspectives simultaneously without essentializing? How can we decenter the subject, the object, and ourselves, and also find sites for ourselves to stand and “profess”? Not all questions can be answered.

Methods are tools for the production of knowledges. Foucault (1995:720) said: “All my books are little tool boxes. If people want to open them, to use a particular sentence, a particular idea, a particular analysis, like a screwdriver or a spanner . . . so much the better!” And, “In fact, Strauss was fond of using the metaphor of interactionism as a conceptual banquet from which guests could select and discard at will, assuring the heterogeneities of practice that he found so fascinating” (Baszanger 1998b:355). Situational analysis offers another toolbox from which

researchers will likely take a little of this and a little of that. Tools are to be used. Have fun.

I end with a comment by Denzin (1995:45): “None of the above measures are completely satisfactory. They are all reflexive and messy. That is as it should be, for the world we encounter is neither neat nor easy to make sense of. Where do we go next?”

Note

1. See Seboni (1997, 2003), Seloilwe (1998a, 1998b), Ndaba-Mbata and Seloilwe (2000), Shaibu (2002), and Shaibu and Wallhagen (2003).