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Analyzing Data for Concepts

But my favorite way of developing concepts is in a continuous dialogue with empirical data. Since concepts are ways of summarizing data, it's important that they be adapted to the data you are going to summarize. (Becker, 1998, p. 109)

Table 8.1 Definition of Terms

✓	Categories: Higher-level concepts under which analysts group lower-level concepts according to shared properties. Categories are sometimes referred to as themes. They represent relevant phenomena and enable the analyst to reduce and combine data.
✓	Coding: Extracting concepts from raw data and developing them in terms of their properties and dimensions.
✓	Concepts: Words that stand for ideas contained in data. Concepts are interpretations, the products of analysis.
✓	Dimensions: Variations within properties that give specificity and range to concepts.
✓	Properties: Characteristics that define and describe concepts.

Introduction

The first chapters provided the foundation behind the approach to qualitative research presented in this book. The next section in the text will take a different turn. The procedures and strategies will be used to demonstrate

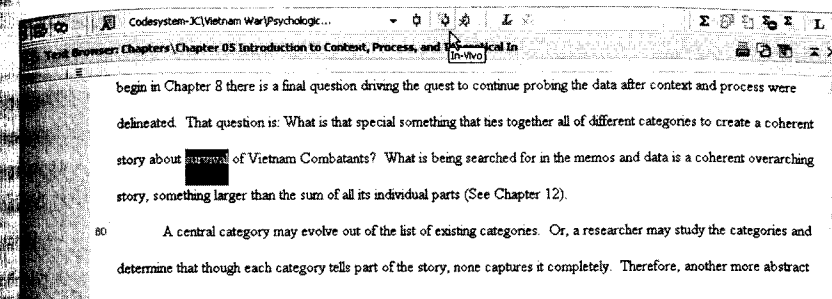
how to do analysis. I have discovered over the years that it is one thing to talk about data collection and analysis and quite another to do it. As the reader moves through the next five chapters, he or she will notice that analytic strategies that were discussed earlier in Chapters 4 and 5 are not something to agonize over but are integrated and natural parts of the analysis. The doing of analysis is fluid and generative.

I'll begin the demonstration project with what is called open coding. Open coding requires a brainstorming approach to analysis because, in the beginning, analysts want to open up the data to all potentials and possibilities contained within them. Only after considering all possible meanings and examining the context carefully is the researcher ready to put interpretive conceptual labels on the data. Conceptualizing data not only reduces the amount of data the researcher has to work with, but at the same time provides a language for talking about the data.

Just as a bit of a refresher before beginning this section, recall that there are many levels of **concepts**. Concepts can range from lower-level concepts to higher-level concepts. Higher-level concepts are called categories/themes and **categories** tell us what a group of lower-level concepts are pointing to or are indicating. All concepts, regardless of level, arise out of data. It is just that some are more abstract than others. The process of conceptualizing data looks like this. The researcher scrutinizes the data in an attempt to understand the essence of what is being expressed in the raw data. Then, the researcher delineates a conceptual name to describe that understanding—a researcher-denoted concept. Other times, participants provide the conceptualization. A term that they use to speak about something is so vivid and descriptive that the researcher borrows it—an in-vivo code.

In this chapter, the analytic focus is upon constructing concepts out of data. First I will break the data into manageable pieces. Second, I will take those pieces of data and explore them for the ideas contained within (interpreting those data). Third, I will give those ideas conceptual names that stand for and represent the ideas contained in the data. Coding requires “thinking outside the box” (Wicker, 1985). It means putting aside preconceived notions about what the researcher expects to find in the research, and letting the data and interpretation of it guide analysis. Coding also means learning to think abstractly. The idea is not just to take a phrase from “raw” data and use it as a label. Rather, coding requires searching for the right word or two that best describe conceptually what the researcher believes is indicated by the data.

The actual procedures used for analyzing data are not as important as the task of identifying the essence or meaning of data. Procedures, you recall from earlier chapters, are just tools. The greatest tools researchers have to work with are their minds and intuition. The best approach to coding is to relax and let your mind and intuition work for you.



Screenshot 8

The screenshot shows the upper menu bar of MAXQDA, situated right above the Text Brower Window, where the currently opened text is displayed and can be worked on. The example shows the in-vivo coding of the code “Survival”: You highlight the word (or term) you want to turn into a code, click on the In-Vivo icon in the menu bar, and the code will automatically be created, inserted into the code system, displayed on its top, and the coding will be displayed in the code margin beside the text (which has not yet happened in this example because the In-Vivo icon has not yet been clicked). The picture also shows the icon to switch the text edit-function on and off on the left of the menu bar, which allows you to make any changes in your text without losing the position of the codings. Right beside it, you see the Quick Code bar, where you can transfer codes from the code system in order to have them right at hand to do concentrated coding for selected codes. On the right of the In-Vivo icon you find the undo function, allowing you to delete all codings within the same working session. The “L” icon besides it is the link option, which you may use to link a word within your text to any word in another place in your data set or to any other place outside your project—for example, a photo on your hard drive, a Web site, and the like.

Demonstration Project

Beginning at this time, I would like to take readers on an analytic journey. I will begin the analysis with the first interview. Each subsequent chapter will build upon analysis derived from the previous chapter. I have chosen a topic of study that I have never researched before. Therefore, I am starting at ground level. Everything I will be doing as part of the study will be done before the eyes of the readers.

Some readers might be disturbed by the topic chosen for the demonstration study. Or, some might say that they can't learn from the demonstration project because the topic is not relevant to their discipline. I understand that some students have difficulty separating the process from the topic; that is, they can't relate to the topic so they dismiss what the author is trying to demonstrate. Remember, it is the process, not the topic, that is relevant here.

I admit that the materials I will be working with are intense. They pertain to soldiers' experiences with the Vietnam War. The purpose of this study is to explain the Vietnam War from the perspective of the soldiers who fought in that war. The relevance of this study to society is its potential to increase understanding of what soldiers go through and have to live with as a result of being in a combat zone. The study also has implications for the health and care of those men and women who served in combat after they return home from war. At the time of the Vietnam War, only men were designated as combatants. There were no women ground soldiers or fighter pilots, though in Vietnam there were women in supportive roles, such as nurses (Smith, 1992; Van Devanter, 1983). Therefore, when I talk specifically about "combatants" I will refer to them in the masculine.

I want to add a note here about the topic of investigation and the research question. Notice that I do not begin with a specific research question, but a general topic area. The question is open ended because, as I begin analysis of this first interview, I do not know where the research will lead me and what questions will evolve as I go along. When I talk about a soldier's experience, I'm *not* talking just about "inner experience" or experience from a phenomenological point of view, rather I am using experience as a general all-encompassing term to describe the entire process of being a frontline soldier or pilot in the Vietnam War, from volunteering for service, to being drafted, and to homecoming. What makes this project a grounded theory study, rather than, say, a phenomenological study, is my background and training as a grounded theorist. I analyze and interpret data differently than would a phenomenologist. My background and training also make me look at context (structure) and process (action/interaction) and lead me to go beyond description to develop a theoretical explanation. However, as readers will see, a researcher need not go all the way to theory development. He or she could stop after concept identification and development and do a very nice descriptive study, adding elements of context and process, as he or she feels competent to do.

During the analysis, I will be working with different types of data, including interviews, memoirs, and historical materials. This chapter is based mainly on interview data and focuses on open coding and concept identification. The entire transcript of the interview can be found in Appendix B. The interview took place in about 1994. It was conducted by Anselm Strauss for purposes other than this project and sat in our files for several years. It describes one man's Vietnam War experience. The interview was discovered recently when I, Corbin, was looking for materials to use for this book. I was struck by the content of the interview and requested permission from the participant to use the materials. Permission was granted.

Analysis

(The first step in any analysis is to read materials from beginning to end. (If a researcher is working with field notes, videos, or other types of documents, he or she could use the same process of going through the entire video or document to get a feel for what it is all about.) When doing that first reading, analysts should resist the urge to write in the margins, underline, or take notes. The idea behind the first reading is to enter vicariously into the life of participants, feel what they are experiencing and listen to what they are telling us.) (Refer to Appendix B with Participant #1 in its entirety.)

Beginning Coding

(Analysts should begin the coding soon after the first interview or observation/video is completed because the first data serve as a foundation for further data collection and analysis.) (Once the researcher has read and digested the entire document, it is time to "go to work on the data," so to speak.) (I use natural breaks in the manuscript as cutting off points, and usually these breaks denote a change in topic, but not always. Then I examine each section in depth.) (Using this detailed approach is more tedious than just doing a general reading of a manuscript, then pulling out some themes.) (However, it is the belief of this author that a "close encounter" with data in the beginning stages of analysis makes the analysis easier in later stages because there exists a strong foundation and less need to go back to find the missing links.) (Detailed work like this in the beginning is what leads to rich and dense description and as well as to well-developed theory.)

(Computers can be used to do coding, but the analyst must be very careful not to fall into the trap of just fixing labels on a piece of data, then putting piles of "raw" data under that label. If a researcher does just this, he or she will end up with a series of concepts with nothing reflective said about what the data are indicating.) (Even with computers, the researcher must take the time to reflect on data and write memos. Thinking is the heart and soul of doing qualitative analysis. Thinking is the engine that drives the process and brings the researcher into the analytic process.)

The process I will use is as follows. I'll take a piece of raw data. That piece of data will be used as a springboard for analysis. (What I am thinking as I analyze data will be presented as a memo. Each memo will be labeled with a concept. Sometimes the code name changed several times as I thought and rethought about the ideas contained in each quote.) (Any conceptual label reflects my interpretation of what is being said, as other researchers may have

their own ideas and even disagree with me.) The idea here is not to quarrel with everything that I say, but to note the process that I am going through.

I will then take the first section of the interview and proceed from there with the analysis. The reader will see that each memo has been assigned a number and titled with a concept that reflects what I think the raw data are all about. Under the title are the actual data followed by the analysis. Some memos will be longer than others. (Remember, this is the first analysis of the first interview.) Memos will become more accurate, complex, and longer later in the study as analysis accumulates.

Memo 1

June 10, 2006

Locating the Self: Time: Entry Into the Military

Basically, I come from a middle-class family, very patriotic, God fearing and religious. We were a very loving family and continue to be. I have three brothers and one sister. My father is dead. My mother died in her eighties. We all get together for a family reunion at least 1 time a year. I left home at sixteen. I worked a couple of years at menial jobs, well not necessarily menial but low paying. I worked as an orderly in a hospital and that's how I became exposed to the nursing profession and decided to pursue that. I was twenty-one-years-old when I was first licensed as a nurse. Now that I'm fifty I have a long history of nursing in there. This was back in the 60s. I worked one year at a veteran's hospital in the city of X, where I was exposed for the first time to veterans, people who had been to wars. Primarily, there were elderly WW I people, some middle-aged WW II people, and a few Korean Veterans thrown in. And I was pretty much interested in listening to them talk about their experiences and all that, so in 1966 when the government finally made a commitment to Vietnam, sending lots of men and women and materials, I volunteered to go.

In these first few lines, the interviewee is looking back "locating himself" at the time of entry into the service. He begins by explaining who he was at that time, what he was doing, and what led him to enlist in the military. I am not certain why he began the interview in this manner, for I wasn't at the interview. Perhaps he was asked to provide this information by Strauss before beginning the interview. Or perhaps the participant felt it was necessary to "locate himself" or explain who he was then versus who he is now. Under the concept of "locating" come several minor concepts—**properties** that help define who he was. The first is "family background" which includes being

"middle-class," "religious," "God fearing," "close," and above all "patriotic." The second concept is "patriotism," which stands out from the rest. I'm not sure what it means to be patriotic since he does not define it for us. The third concept is "path to the war," that is, how he got to the war and his mindset and preparations for going to war. The "path to war" subconcepts include: hearing war stories, being a nurse, volunteering (which is a concept that I want to come back to), becoming a "six-week wonder," being an officer, and being quickly dispatched to the war zone. I must say that his "path" has the **dimensions** of being "straight" and "quick." There is no indication of inner conflict about going to war or negative feelings about the war itself at the time.

Methodological Note

(From time to time I will insert a methodological note between the memos to explain analytically what is going on.) In the above case, what is important to note is that though there were several lesser concepts, like "family background," "path to the war," and "patriotism," these were not listed as topic headings. One of the mistakes beginning analysts make is to fail to differentiate between levels of concepts. They don't start early in the analytic process differentiating lower-level explanatory concepts from the larger ideas or higher-level concepts that seem to unite them. (Note how the lower-level concepts fill in, explain, and tell us something about who the person was and give us some of the properties and dimensions of "locating the self.") "Locating the self" is a higher-level concept because it can be applied to other interviews. The notion of "locating the self" can crosscut interviews while the specifics like being from a "middle-class family" are likely to be different for different people.

If an analyst does not begin to differentiate at this early stage of analysis, he or she is likely to end up with pages and pages of concepts and no idea how they fit together. (Furthermore, if the analyst relates lower-level concepts to a broader concept like "locating the self," the concept of "locating" can be qualified more specifically such as "at the time of entry.") The analyst can then look at data to determine how the same and/or other persons locate themselves later in the war experience or even later in their lives. Everyone reading this should be able to see the difference in abstraction between concepts like "family background" and "locating the self." Family background tells an analyst something about the "self" at the time of entry into the military. It is part of the explanation of who he was and why he enlisted. (Locating the self is the analyst's interpretation of what the respondent is doing.)

Memo 2**June 10, 2006****Being a Volunteer Versus Being Drafted Versus Being a Draft Dodger**

Well, I kind of volunteered. I was one step ahead of the draft. So I volunteered to go. I did basic training at Ft. Sam Houston in Texas, a six-week wonder. I came out as a second lieutenant and was immediately sent to Vietnam.

There are three concepts here. One is "being a volunteer." This concept comes directly out of the data. Drawing upon my general knowledge of the time, I also know that at the time of the Vietnam War the draft was still in place and that many of the young men who went to Vietnam did so not because they were patriotic but because they were drafted into the army and had no acceptable way out. I also know that there was a group of "draft dodgers." I have no data on draftees or draft dodgers at this time. The concept of being a "volunteer" interests me because it denotes a willingness to go to war, or at least in his case a more or less willingness to go to Vietnam. Our interviewee was young, only twenty-one. He was not in college at the time but had graduated from nursing school. He was patriotic but didn't enlist because of patriotism, and says rather it was because he believed that eventually he would be drafted. Let me spell out some of the conditions that he gives for enlisting. He came from a "patriotic family" and going to war seemed to him like "the right thing to do" at the time. Yet, he says he volunteered to stay one step ahead of the draft, a little contradiction here. As an analyst, I wonder if volunteering vs. being drafted makes a difference in the war experience. If young men volunteer for the military, are they more likely "accepting," "ready," and "committed to the war effort" at the time of entry than, say, someone who is drafted or one who doesn't want to go? Also there is another point; if a young man enlists, he is given a choice about the branch of service he enters. As I proceed with my analysis I want to see if volunteering vs. being drafted makes a difference in the overall war experience. Also, it might be important to see if there is any difference between those who are in the military for just a four-year term vs. the career people. It will be also be interesting to see if there is information out there about draft dodgers and how those who had to serve and were wounded feel about those who managed to avoid serving.

Memo 3**June 10, 2006****Being a Noncombatant Versus Being a Combatant**

I . . . most of the time I was there I worked in transport and an evacuation hospital. We went out in helicopters and picked up people from aide stations,

which were pretty much . . . it's hard to say because there were no really defined lines. The lines could change every day, two to three times a day but the aide stations were in areas of conflict. We would transport the most seriously wounded back to Saigon, which was about 75 miles away.

Being a "combatant" and being a "noncombatant" seem to be relevant concepts. The interviewee tells us that he worked in helicopter transport and in an evacuation hospital indicating that he was a "noncombatant." Being a noncombatant is interesting because it makes him different from the guys who actually engaged in front-line fighting. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that he did not experience the horrors of war. He did fly into battle zones, that I will call "zones of conflict," and transport the wounded back into "zones of safety," which in this case was about 75 miles away.

So what does it mean to be a noncombatant? I need more data in order to understand the differences between combatants and noncombatant in war. However, I can play an analytic comparative game based on what I know from general readings about war. Being a combatant means that a person's "life is at-risk" much of the time. Combatants see their "comrades wounded" and "killed." A combatant "must kill" or "be killed" in "battle." Also, being a combatant means constant "fear and stress" during contact with the enemy. Being at war is in some ways similar to being a "hunter" but it has that added twist of being both "hunter" and potential "prey." It's like a mad video game where each side is out to get the other but in the case of war the "kill" is for "real." The "enemy" is there to kill you, and will, if you don't kill him first. I'm not certain that a person can fully comprehend the meaning of war and the constant stress and fear associated with being simultaneously hunter and prey unless one has been there.

Being a noncombatant provokes different kinds of fear and stress. Non-combatants can be "prey" if they are in the wrong location but they don't go out "on the hunt" for the enemy. A noncombatant is "not a killer;" the gun, if carried, is for "self-defense" if he somehow comes under attack. This particular noncombatant's job was to "care for the injured." His exposure to "enemy fire" was "intermittent" mostly when he flew on missions to the aide stations. The notion of "care" vs. "kill" I think is a very defining one, making the war experience different for this research participant vs. one who is a combatant. Being a noncombatant doesn't lessen the contribution to the war effort but it does frame the experience differently. There isn't the first hand experience of engaging the enemy and being shot at sometimes for hours on end as in battle, though medics have this experience. Yet, from my readings I know that many of the nurses that went to Vietnam suffered considerable stress and had many of the same problems readjusting that the combatants did (Moore, 1992; Smith, 1992; Van Devanter, 1983) because of the pressure, intensity, stress, and the sight of wounded and dead young men.

Memo 4**June 10, 2006****The Enemy**

I was very much anti-Vietnamese like most of the soldiers always feel about their enemies.

This memo ties in with Memo 3, picking up on the concept of "the enemy." He is telling us that he was anti-North Vietnamese and saw them as "the enemy." The word "always" is interesting. I wonder if soldiers always see their opponents as "enemy." The use of the word "always" kind of bothers me here. But going on, an enemy is someone who wants to harm you if given a chance, someone who wants to bring you harm, someone your country is fighting. Whether the act of defining someone as an enemy is rational or not doesn't matter if one acts upon that definition. When I think about it, the funny thing is that both sides are fighting the "enemy." In war, you are enemy to each other. Without an enemy there would be no war, no one to fight against. But, you can be enemies without necessarily fighting when tensions between two groups may be high. It is difficult for me, having never been to war, to comprehend the abstract notion of "enemy," however I think that once someone starts shooting at you with the aim to kill you the concept of enemy becomes very concrete. The "enemy" is the person who is shooting at you. I wonder under what conditions a combatant would not see the opponent as an enemy.

Memo 5**June 10, 2006****Zones of Safety and Zones of Conflict or Killing Zones**

This memo also picks up on an idea that came out of Memo 3, rather than addressing any specific field notes, and is important to understanding the "war experience." There are no real safe places when a person is in a war, however there are fronts, or "zones of conflict," "killing zones," or places where battles are being fought at this moment in time. And there are "safety zones," places removed from battle sites, like bases—though these are not necessarily safe and indeed were attacked during the Vietnam War. Flying into "zones of conflict" in a helicopter carries a lot of risks because helicopters were targets, especially as they got close to the ground. Even though our participant was not actually engaged in fighting the enemy, he was a potential target every time he got into a helicopter and went into the battle zone for a rescue. And as our participant says, the zones of conflict were constantly shifting from one place

to another so it was difficult to know where to land the helicopter to pick up the wounded or dead soldiers. The wounded were transported 75 miles away where they could be treated. But as we know, even Saigon eventually became a battle site. So what was a safe place one day might become a battle zone on another day. That was the problem with Vietnam, or any war, for one never really knew "who" the enemies were and "where" they would strike next, keeping everyone on edge.

Memo 6**June 10, 2006****The Military System**

This is still another exploratory memo coming off of Memo 3 and expanding upon it. Reading about how wounded are taken to different areas depending upon the degree to which they are injured reminds me that the military is a "giant system" of "rules" and "arrangements." The military must transport soldiers and supplies from one place to another, provide for sick and wounded soldiers, feed the troops, provide ammunition, come up with plans for attack, and so on. In the military there are policies and systems for doing everything. Also, discipline is strict and necessary for the welfare of the group. How else could you get a bunch of young men to go out and shoot at the enemy and be shot at in return? Soldiers must obey orders even if those orders are wrong or don't make sense. The logistics of carrying out a war is mind-boggling. I noticed when watching the latest war in Iraq on the television that there was a whole military system established to wage and support the war. Without soldiers there would be no war and without this whole back up and support system the soldiers couldn't fight a war. I think that how soldiers feel about a war partially can be explained by whether or not they feel supported by this back up system as well as explained by how they feel about the war they are fighting. Are the back up systems like helicopter support and additional troops there when you need them? Are supplies available? Do you get time to rest between battles? Are you adequately cared for if you are wounded? This is where participant #1 comes into the picture; he was part of this support system, providing care for the wounded.

Methodological Note

I want to interrupt the analysis here to explain methodologically what I am doing. I am identifying concepts from data, as the reader can see. At the same time, I am making notations in memos that reflect the mental dialogue occurring between the data and me. (In the memos I am asking questions,

making comparisons, throwing out ideas, and brainstorming.) Though this system of dialoging with the data may seem tedious, and at times rambling, it is important to the analysis because it stimulates the thinking process and directs the inquiry by suggesting further areas for data collection. Most of all, it helps the analyst to get inside the data, to start to feel them at a gut level.

Researchers often have a great deal of curiosity but often have little experience with the topics that are studying. To understand what it is like to go to war, or "the war experience," the analyst has to feel the experience through the eyes of the participants. Notice that the analysis does not seem "forced." Asking questions and making comparisons comes naturally when working with data. Though the analyst can never fully understand another person's experience, the more that he or she works with data, thinks about them, and mulls them over, the more the data take on meaning and the researcher starts to understand. One more point: If I were working as part of a team, then the team members would be having similar discussions among themselves. Working as a team is not only fun, researchers are stimulated in their thinking by the ideas of others. In teams the analysis seems to proceed at a much faster rate because of this reciprocal stimulation of ideas. It is important, though, that one person be the designated "note keeper" so that team discussions are kept on track, order is maintained, and notes are written up later as memos.)

Imagination on team's brainstorming

Memo 7

June 11, 2006

Locating the Self: Trying to Find Meaning

Let's see . . . I was pretty young, twenty-one-years-old, very patriotic and gung ho, and thought that we had every right to be there and doing what we were doing. I was very much anti-Vietnamese like most of the soldiers always feel about their enemies.

Once more our respondent is again locating himself at the time of enlistment. He lists these personal characteristics: patriotic, gung ho, and he thought "we had a right to be there and doing what we were doing." He was "anti-Vietnamese" because this is the way "soldiers are supposed to feel" about the enemy. In making this statement, it is almost like he is looking back trying to explain why he enlisted both to himself as well as to the researcher. But this locating makes a very important point. To understand an experience from the viewpoint of those who participated in that experience, a researcher can only view it through their eyes and "looking back" at who they were then and distinguishing that from who they are in the present. Had the participant been asked how he felt about the war at

the time that he left for Vietnam he would have told us, "going was the right thing to do." Between his going to Vietnam and the time of the interview he has come to see war differently. Later in the interview he makes a very important point. It is difficult to evaluate an experience when you are "living it." There is the experience as you "live it" and experience as you "reflect" back on it. Only when we look back can we put our actions and experiences into perspective. Looking back is always a construction from the present. There is another assumption made here by the participants—that soldiers are supposed to feel that way about the enemy. How are soldiers supposed to feel? I don't know.

Memo 8

June 11, 2006

Inconsistencies in War: Psychological Strategies for Blocking Out or Minimizing Inconsistencies

I guess during the time I was there I started to become aware at little nips at my conscience, inconsistencies, but don't think that I paid much attention to them. There was too much going on to have really given a lot of thought to that. And I'm not sure that it's not some sort of unconscious mechanism that keeps you from looking at what you're doing and evaluating it. I don't know if it's because you don't want to or you choose not to. I'm not sure. It's pretty hard when you're in the middle of something to be evaluative while you're doing it.

It was during the "Vietnam War experience" that our participant first became aware of "nips of conscience" that led to his change in attitude about war. Stimulating the "nips at conscience" were events that he perceived to be inconsistent, but inconsistent with what? I presume he means with the moral standards of the society he came from? What is the meaning of this word "inconsistent"? He goes on to tell us that at the time he didn't dwell on these "nips at his conscience" because he was too busy "being in the experience" caring for the wounded. Naturally, we all have "psychological strategies" for handling uncomfortable situations, avoidance being one of those strategies. I'll code his "avoidance" as "psychological survival strategies" because, as our participant tells us later in the interview, it would be difficult to survive psychologically and physically in a war if one dwelled too much on what one was seeing or doing. He talks about "not dwelling" upon or "evaluating." Later in the interview he talks about "becoming hardened" by the experience. That is, with time, he learned not to feel things so deeply. Constant exposure to something does tend to desensitize one and maybe that is what he means by "hardened." There are now two different psychological survival strategies, "avoidance" and "hardening." I'm sure as I go on with this study I'll find many more.

Memo 9**June 11, 2006****Perceptions of the War Experience**

Actually I can't say that my experience was all that bad. I was young and kind of enjoyed that experience. I think it's the most maturing thing I've ever done in my life to be there and realize that people would want to kill me. As far as I know I never killed anybody else even though we had to carry weapons at times. I never shot at anyone. Not on purpose anyway. It was a strange time in my development.

Here our respondent is giving us one viewpoint, one dimension of the "war experience," the "not so bad part." I suspect that he saw his experience as not "all that bad" because he was a "noncombatant." His job was to "care for the injured" and not "kill or defeat the enemy." He also got to sleep in a bed at night in a somewhat "safe zone." And, he was young and ready for adventure. But I know from my readings that there are many ex-soldiers who would describe the experience differently. That is why I must get data about "combatants" next to make that comparison. Two more points that he makes seem important in this section of the interview. One is that he states that he never killed anyone in the war, so that he never had to "carry that burden" on his "conscience." He also ends this section by saying it was a "strange time" in his development. What does he mean by a "strange time"? To use one of our analytic aids, I ask, what is the meaning of this term? Does he mean strange as unknown and that he couldn't quite understand what was happening to him at the time? Or, in the sense that being in war is a "surreal experience," one goes through it hoping to survive long enough to come home. I wonder how other soldiers describe this experience.

Memo 10**June 11, 2006****A Broader Memo About The War Experience**

I want to step outside this interview and write a broader memo about the "war experience." I want to get my mind thinking about some of the properties of the experience. It appears that the war experience can vary from "not so bad" (he doesn't go so far as to call it good) to "very bad." The experience goes on "over time" and therefore one's experience can vary over that time. The experience though "ongoing" usually takes place during youth and therefore the war experience has potential consequences for the present and future biography of the

individual. It can hasten maturity by forcing one to become responsible, self-reliant, and capable. It can also have negative effects, especially if one becomes bitter, angry, and unforgiving. Most of the men who go to war are young, and somewhat innocent about what war is all about at first. "Images of war" are romanticized and derived from oral stories, and reading. Being at war, "in the experience," changes one's images to a more realistic view of what it is all about. Calling the experience a "strange" time in his development still confuses me. Perhaps he is indicating that war is an experience that one can never really be prepared for no matter how much military training one gets. You have to "undergo" the experience before you can really appreciate it. It is like stepping into a world that even in your worst nightmares you could never have imagined.

Memo 11**June 11, 2006****The Culture of War and Its Inconsistencies**

A lot of things that I hold sacrosanct such as the value of human life, I guess I saw that diminish. I was there in '66-'67 during the Tet Offensive when the North Vietnamese fought back and really won a great victory. I can remember in this one village, the village was called "Cu Chi," after they had been routed, there were dead Vietnamese, these were South Vietnamese, killed by the Viet Cong, and they were stacked along the road like racks of firewood and I can remember not having any emotion about that. It was just like "Hey this is war!" This is what kind of happens. So that kind of confused me because before that the thought of someone dying would send me into some sort of scurrying behavior. Working in a hospital, if someone is dying you really get concerned and upset about that.

As I read these words, "a lot of things that I hold sacrosanct such as the value of human life, I guess I saw that diminish." I am struck by what might be called "the culture of war" and the personal change that occurs when one is forced to live and survive in this culture. Because killing and death are so prevalent, one begins to accept these as the norm. I see the "culture of war" as a major theme running through this interview. It is the context or backdrop underlying the war experience. The "culture of war" will probably become a category as I proceed with this analysis because the more I get into this study, the more impressed I am with this notion of a "culture of war" which definitely is different from "civilian culture." So, what is the culture of war and how does it differ from civilian culture? Civilian culture encompasses the values, beliefs, and standards of the society we grow up in. These define our attitudes and actions on an everyday basis. What is the culture of war? The culture of war is

defined by the military system. It too has its own set of rules and norms. To function in a culture of war, civilian attitudes and beliefs must be put aside and new ones adopted. In a culture of war, it is okay to shoot someone designated as an enemy. The intent of war is to defeat the enemy by any means open to you within the "rules of engagement." In a civilian culture, we don't normally go around shooting someone and if someone is ill or hurt we do everything that we can to save the person. How difficult it must be, then, to set aside those values that are "bred" into you by the society. Somehow a person has to "reconcile the inconsistencies" between civilian life and war in order to function and therefore to survive. The comment "Hey, this is war," says it all because war means death and destruction. It is one of those "psychological survival strategies" used by our participant and probably others for "reconciling the inconsistencies" between civilian and war culture. Now we have another "psychological survival strategy" and that is "redefining moral values to fit with the situation."

Memo 12

June 11, 2006

More Psychological Survival Strategies

And I just really didn't feel anything about that. Like this was all well and good, that's the way thing should be in war. It was a strange feeling. And if I remember correctly, most of the people around me didn't show any emotion about that either. In fact, there was a lot of jocularity. "Well that is one less 'gook' we have to worry about." That was a common name for the Vietnamese, "gooks" . . . so let's see. . . .

There is no doubt that physical and psychological survival within the "culture of war" depends upon a person's capacities to develop strategies that mitigate the horrors of the war experience. Our respondent tells us that he "did not feel anything." To "feel" would break through the "protective shield" you surround yourself with in order to survive. When you see bodies stacked along the road, you tell yourself "this is war" and you feel no emotion, no pity or remorse for the "enemy." Other psychological strategies, in addition to putting up a "protective shield" include "making jokes" or "making light of the situation" and "distancing oneself from the enemy"—"gooks." Psychological survival strategies help you to "block out" the sights, sounds, of war and enable you to go on. I want to hold on to this notion of "blocking out" because I think it is a very important to managing the experience of war both during the war and afterwards.

Memo 13

June 11, 2006

Another Memo on the Enemy and Psychological Strategies for Dealing With the War

For a while, then, I worked in an evacuation hospital. They kind of rotated you from job to job. The strange thing is these were Quonset huts set up like hospital units and there were . . . we would have three kinds of people in there at one time, which was strange. We would have wounded American soldiers, we would have wounded South Vietnamese soldiers, and we'd have wounded Viet Cong or North Vietnamese. So we kind of depersonalized those people. I remember when we would give report to an oncoming shift we would talk about our soldiers, use their names and stuff like that. I remember when giving report on a North Vietnamese or a South Vietnamese we would say "bed #12" or the "gook" in room such and such. It was a way of depersonalizing that person so you didn't have to feel for them. You couldn't communicate with them because you couldn't speak the language. You very seldom had a translator or interpreter around.

In this war, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were the "enemy." Here is another one of those "contradictions" of war. The job of soldiers is to kill the enemy. But once an enemy is wounded he or she ends up in the same hospital ward as your own soldiers and has to be cared for. To handle the incongruity, those caring for wounded enemy developed psychological strategies for "taking care" of the enemy without coming to "care about" the enemy. No names or identities are given to the enemy. It's just "bed #" or "gook." You don't make an effort to talk to them. You don't have to because you don't speak the same language and interpreters are in short supply. Our respondent goes on to say:

What I do remember about these men was how stoic they were. I can't remember them asking for something to ease their pain, which as I think back they must have been in. At the same time, unfortunately, I don't remember myself, or any of the other nurses or doctors ever taking the initiative to find out if they were in discomfort. The wounds of war can be terrible. I don't know. I never thought about that at the time. I don't remember ever giving a Vietnamese anything for pain.

It is interesting that what stands out in our respondent's mind after all these years is the "stoicism" of the enemy. A little further down in the interview our respondent describes the treatment given to the North Vietnamese, in fact even the South Vietnamese who were the "friendly" Vietnamese, as "benign neglect." In the hospitals they didn't hurt the enemy or allow anyone else to, but didn't reach out to relieve pain or provide solace. "Giving solace to the

enemy" is not something one generally does. It is contrary to the culture of war. One senses, however, that in looking back our respondent feels some remorse for his behavior. That is, he wishes that he had been more sensitive to the pain and psychological hurt of even the enemy.

Methodological Note

In the above memo and several others before it, notice that I am linking concepts; that is, putting "enemy" together with "psychological strategies" for handling the enemy "under certain conditions"—in this case, having to care for the enemy. Since the analysis is still in the beginning stages, I can say that at this time I think that these two concepts have some relationship to each other, though I might not be certain yet how they are linked.

Memo 14

June 12, 2006

Letting Down the Emotional Guard

They were very stoic. I do remember one incident where I felt sorry for this Vietnamese person and I don't remember if he was an enemy Vietnamese or a friendly Vietnamese. It's when he woke up after surgery and looked under the covers and saw that one of his legs was missing and he was crying. Being unable . . . I don't remember anyone, myself included, being able to comfort this person in any way.

Despite efforts to "block out" feelings about the enemy as human, at times feelings came through. The "breakthrough" moments must have been uncomfortable psychologically because survival depends on blocking out all feeling for the enemy as human. I sense that now that the war is over it's okay to allow those feelings. As he looks back, I sense he feels some degree of guilt and remorse. Of course, these feelings are being experienced in light of the present.

Memo 15

June 12, 2006

More About the Moral Inconsistencies in War and Psychological Survival Strategies

Hmm . . . Then again this would be abnormal behavior on the part of a medical person outside a war zone. We wouldn't let people suffer emotionally or physically the way we let these people suffer.

War is full of "moral inconsistencies." It is difficult to judge behavior in war from the standpoint of an outsider because war of necessity requires ways of acting that are different from civilian life. Our participant compares now and then from the perspective of looking back from where he is now—older, wiser, and part of a civilian culture. He seems upset at his own past behavior. The self does not stand still; it continues to evolve or change with experience and the passage of time. Our respondent continues:

At times there would be conflicts in the units because we would have these three groups of people. Some American soldiers or South Vietnamese would see that their enemy was in there, the North Vietnamese or Viet Cong and there would be conflict. We would always protect them from the other people. We would never allow our soldiers to physically abuse them, although I do remember a lot of verbal behaviors, threats and all, but I never saw any physical violence. There was never a question about who would get care, or who would get supplies as they were needed. Always, the Americans or the Australians came first. There was an Australian division next to ours and they would wind up in our hospital. Ah . . . they always got priority of care and supplies. Generally there was enough to go around. So ah. . . . I recall one incident where I didn't make the choice, but a choice was made to take a North Vietnamese off a ventilator and use it for an American soldier because it was the only one available. That is the only time I remember that kind of decision being made. Most of the time it was more of a case of benign neglect of their needs, to see if they really did want or need something. Sometimes I can remember the South Vietnamese interrogation team came into the hospital to interrogate the Viet Cong and I can remember at times they took the people out of the hospital. I can only imagine what happened to them. They would take them out. They said they were going to take them to another hospital but I'm sure they were taken and interrogated or even killed. But again, at the time, in all reality that didn't bother me. It was war and they were just faceless people. They were just another North Vietnamese to me . . . Like I said there were times when it would slip into my consciousness, I would think about the inconsistencies.

This long section repeats what was said before, so there is no need to take it apart on a line-by-line basis. It is important to note so that I can put this together with other similar memos. What is stated in this long quote gets at the heart of the "moral inconsistencies of war." What is normal in war is not standard behavior in civilian life. A nurse treats the enemy with "benign neglect" but he or she can't let a patient be cared for back home with benign neglect. If you did, you would lose your job. In war, a nurse couldn't let himself or herself "feel" the pain of the enemy, in other words bond or empathize with them. If a nurse did, then he or she wouldn't be able to let the South Vietnamese army take the enemy out of the hospital to be interrogated and most likely executed. So, you distance yourself from the enemy, disregard what is going on, and make them faceless people. In this way, what happens doesn't bother you. Again, the participant brings out the small "breakthroughs" of conscience,

which is important. I think it is these breakthroughs of conscience that enable one to maintain one's humanness during war. When breakthrough happens, a way to quiet the conscience is to say, "It was war and these were faceless people. They were just another North Vietnamese to me."

Memo 16

June 13, 2006

Inconsistencies of Treatment Within the Military System

I would think about the inconsistencies. It was not only the treatment of the Vietnamese that bothered me but there was a hierarchal system within the American army system. I was an officer so I had a lot more privileges than did the basic soldier. They would have to work a 12–18 hour shift at a stretch whereas officers did not. They were the "grunts," but that's the military. That's consistent worldwide with military everywhere. I'm trying to think about my peers, to think back to see if we had any discussions about what was going on. I don't recall any. I really don't know anything about how other people were feeling while they were there, if they were having any problems with what they were seeing or not.

All men in the military are not created equal. The military is built on a hierarchical system. That is part of the context within which all military personnel must operate. The context the interviewee describes is one where officers get more privileges and better working conditions and, most of all, less physical risks than the lower-level soldiers. Other than describing how this affected him, there is little more said. He didn't see any evidence of this affecting other soldiers. Or if it did, they never said. Context is important to understanding the "war experience." But what this gets at for me, is what I sense is a growing "disenchantment" with the military and its systems. It is one of those incidents that contributes to, and acts as a condition for his evolving change in attitude about the military, being in the military, and about war and country.

Memo 17

June 13, 2006

Normalizing the Situation: Another Psychological Survival Strategy

It amazes me how comfortable you can get in that situation. You get up and go to work and it just doesn't seem to bother you a great deal. I that guess that's part of the whole human adaptation that goes on. You just adapt to the

surroundings. But life took on an almost normal feel at the time. You had parties. At times the big concern was "where are we going to get enough beer." Or "can we trade some penicillin to another group for some whiskey" or something like that. We never thought that maybe some other group needed that medicine.

I think that what our participant is expressing here is something that I've begun to feel as I get into this study, being that "under conditions of war," there is a "moral adjustment" that takes place. Otherwise you couldn't survive or live with the moral contradictions. Occasionally, as our respondent points out, there are "breakthroughs of conscience." But these are quickly "blocked," walled off in the inner recesses of the mind, because they don't fit with every day reality of a war situation. At the same time, soldiers try to "normalize" life or maybe "escape" the situation by having parties and being concerned with having enough beer. "Normalizing" is a way of relieving stress and stepping out of the conflict for a while. Trading and bargaining are also "normal behaviors" and have been going on since the beginning of man. If one has penicillin and another has beer, why not make an exchange. But again, as our participant looks back, what seemed normal to him at the time takes on a different reality in the present. In talking about the experience, he is trying to "reconcile these different realities." "Reconciling these different realities" is what many veterans have to work through when they come home. The concept of "reconciling different realities" seems to be an important one and I'll have to keep it in mind as I go on.

Memo 18

June 13, 2006

More About Moral Contradictions

I: Were you ever attacked? Did you ever feel in any danger when you were there?

R: *Do you mean the compound or the hospital itself? The hospital itself came under fire very often and there were people killed in the encampment. When fire did come we had to move patients out of their beds onto the floor on their mattresses. The buildings, the Quonset huts, were made out of tin and when a shell would hit there would be shrapnel flying around. But we never moved the North Vietnamese. They stayed in their beds. Americans went on the floor on their mattresses out of the line of fire.*

As I work with this data, some vague notions are beginning to stir in my brain. Looking at all the inconsistencies that our participant mentions, I'm beginning to get a picture in my mind of this place called Vietnam, at least from the perspective of this participant. It is a place of "inconsistencies," moral and otherwise, a surreal environment, where wrong is right, and right is

wrong. Even places of safety are not so safe because the enemy is firing into hospitals and though wounded American soldiers are taken out of their beds, the Vietnamese are left in their beds in the line of fire.

Then the respondent goes on to say:

... Some of the other inconsistencies were that during the day we allowed Vietnamese to come into the encampment to work, clean up the place and that kind of thing. You don't know if at night they went out and put on their black pajamas and became Viet Cong. It's like in the daytime you are okay. We can see you. We don't know who you are at night, that kind of thing.

In the daytime, the Vietnamese are workers at the base. At night, they are foe attacking that same base—another “inconsistency.” The “face reality” is not the “known reality” but a world where nothing is as it appears. How do you give meaning to that world and maintain a sense of purpose and mental balance when there are so many inconsistencies? All one can do is focus on “survival.” I keep wondering if there is something that I can compare this experience to, in order to get a better handle on it. All I can think of is Alice in Wonderland in the sense of multiple people running around in a surreal world. But that is not a helpful a comparison. Hmm, maybe a better comparison is climbing a high mountain like Mt. Everest. It calls for survival in a hostile environment. Conditions on the mountain can turn your mind to mush, confuse you, and make it difficult to get out alive, and what appears to be real might not be “real” because of the effects of altitude on the brain. On Everest, your life depends upon training, physical ability, mental strength, the proper equipment, lots of luck, and making right decisions in response to contingencies. Survival in war also depends upon having training, physical ability, mental strength and discipline, a lot of luck, the proper equipment and support, and making the decisions in response to contingencies. But in Vietnam, moral codes are also turned upside down to some extent, one is out of touch with the world one came from, and what might seem wrong at home, seems right there. Only the fittest mentally and physically can come through the experience unscathed, or perhaps a better way of saying it is only the fittest can make the readaptation to civilian life without a lot of help. I think that the most helpful readaptive strategies are what our respondent describes in the next section of the interview. These include “closing off the experience” and “putting up a wall of silence.”

Memo 19

June 13, 2006

Coming Home and Getting on With Life

I stayed there for a year. In retrospect it was not a terrible year. It went very fast. It was very maturing for me. Uhm . . . It was in '67 that I came back. That

was when the peace movement was starting to be heard very vocally. I remember my first stop after Saigon was the San Francisco airport. They made us take off our uniforms and change into civilian clothes because people in the airport were throwing things at the soldiers coming back from Vietnam and calling them murderers and things like that. That made me really mad. I thought I had gone over there and taken part in something all well and good and how could they treat us like that.

In the above words, the interviewee turns from Vietnam to “coming home.” This section is fascinating because in it he describes the transition from war to home. For him, the transition is rather smooth. He goes on with his life doing those things that he had planned while he was still in Vietnam. The reason that he gives for doing this post-war planning is revealing. It provided him with something to hold on to, probably helping him to survive. He gives us another survival strategy, “planning for the future.”

He also points out that when he got home he found another inconsistency. People at home did not hold the same view of the war or his participation as he did. It made him angry to think that he and others had answered the call to serve their country, and risked their lives, only to return home and be treated as somehow “unclean” for having done so.

Memo 20

June 13, 2006

The American Failure: A War Hostile Environment

This was 1967 and the peace movement was big. I was in college and I would get angry with the student marchers, groups, and stuff like that. There were still soldiers over there and I know that it hurt them to watch that, to see the news and all of that. Now looking back, as I said before, I admire the marchers. At the time I was seeing them from my viewpoint, a patriot, and they were seeing the war from their viewpoint, “this is all wrong.” So looking back now I admire those people who at the time had more insight into that situation than I did at the time. It was wrong.

I am not calling the peace marchers themselves the “American failure” but what is important is that the peace marchers served as a constant reminder that the country was engaged in a war that they seemed to be losing. In addition, our participant thought going to Vietnam was the “right thing” to do but when he returns he finds people telling him that it was the “wrong thing.” Worse yet, implied in the treatment of returning soldiers is a blame game. Soldiers are blamed for fighting in an unpopular war when more often than not they were drafted and forced to go to war. Rich kids got deferments, middle-class and poorer kids went to war. He reports feeling angry with the peace marchers. With

time, he changed his mind about the war, and it took on a new meaning for him. Getting on with life in this "war hostile environment" requires the strategy of "having to pass," that is, putting aside your soldier's uniform and blending into the crowd. "Having to pass" and "not responding to the masses" is not easy for someone who has just returned from war and who still believes in his country and its mission even though patriotism had a few cracks in it. In addition, many young men were still in Vietnam sacrificing their lives while others at home who had never "experienced the horrors of war" sat in judgment on them.

Memo 21

June 13, 2006

Growing Disillusionment: A New Meaning of War

Over the years my feelings about that have changed. It was senseless for us to have been there. It's hard to lose your patriotism. It's hard to give that up.

This is a short bit of information but a significant one. It ties together nicely his evolving meaning of war. When he went to war, he saw it as the "right thing to do," and over the years he began to think of war as futile. But a lot happened in between then and now. It wasn't only the war, but the social unrest, subsequent wars, the advent of AIDS. The war was the catalyst for change in the sense that it opened his eyes. The reality of injured men and death in war sowed the seeds of disillusionment. Events after that just helped those seeds to grow. Change begins when the first "moral inconsistencies" and "nips of conscience" happen and continue into the present. "Change of self" and "change of meaning" are important themes running through this interview. I think part of the disillusionment has to do also with peace marchers who hassled returning soldiers, and anger at the lack of recognition from society for those who fought in the war. In addition, there is anger at a government who sent the young men to war while at the same time failed to make a total commitment to fighting it. I wonder how prevalent this anger is among those who served in Vietnam? One need not have gone to Vietnam to be disillusioned with war or government. Our respondent seems to be struggling to find meaning in an experience that carries with it so much emotion and inconsistency.

Methodological Note

In the last memo, I could have coded the interviewee's feelings as "change in attitude," or as "losing patriotism" as beginning researchers often do. But what an analyst tries to do as an analyst is get at the essence of what is being

said; that is, try to understand what the underlying issues are rather than focusing on every little possible concept in data. I am also relating the "disillusionment" to the "meaning of war" and describing how that meaning evolves over time, and place, and as a result of a variety of experiences, each one feeding into the other. Also note that some of the memos put together two concepts such as "war experience" and "psychological survival strategies." These memos are examples of axial coding because they show the relationships between two or more concepts.

Memo 22

June 13, 2006

War as a Maturational Stepping Stone: The Changing Self

What I think that the experience did to me is give me the motivation to do something. I was maybe twenty-two or twenty-three by then. I don't remember which but by then I had formulated plans of what I wanted to do when I was discharged. I came back to X to finish my time out there. I applied to the university and received a bachelor's and master's in nursing. I was very busy. I worked part-time and went to school.

This participant points out that going to war gave him the motivation to go on to school and do something with his life. He mentions several reasons for war being a maturational experience in the remainder of the interview, things like having to take responsibility, having good role models, and finally learning to accept himself as being gay (see full interview in Appendix A). It was only "one year out of his life," "one point" in his total development. I wouldn't say that war was as much of a "turning point" for him as it was an important "developmental milestone." So there is another process described in this data, "the changing self." In his case it was a maturational process. The war was a stepping-stone to a change that occurred in the self.

Memo 23

June 13, 2006

The Wall of Silence

I was very busy. I worked part-time and went to school. I was really too busy to think about that whole experience. I just put it on the back burner and went

on with my life. I really, at this point, can say that there weren't any major negative affects of the war on my life. It's hard to know over the years how my feelings about war and killing have changed. It's hard to say what caused the change, whether it's a maturation process or whether it was just becoming aware of all the inconsistencies and feeling the futility of war. I normally have avoided situations where I would bring this stuff back into consciousness. I have never gone, never went to watch a movie about Vietnam. Those never had any appeal to me at all. I don't know why they don't appeal. I never tried to maintain any friendships with any of the people that I knew in Vietnam. I got out of the military. I knew I never wanted any more of that.

One of the fascinating aspects about this whole Vietnam experience for me is the "wall of silence" that seems to exist about it, an internal wall built around the experience itself, and an external wall between the self and the outside world. Ex-military don't really want to talk about it especially with outsiders. When I tried to get participants for this study I was met with a "wall of silence." Only one person responded to my call for volunteer participants. Another person who responded to my call for participants but did not want to be interviewed said, "I can't talk about Vietnam to my wife, why would I talk to you?" (meaning me the researcher). All I can conclude is that for many Vietnam veterans the war was a very "disturbing experience" to put it lightly. And when the soldiers came home, the reception they received pushed them further behind their wall. They don't even like talking among themselves, as is so evident in this interview. This man never talked about the war with his partner or his brothers. This participant maintained his wall of silence intact by "keeping busy," "not talking to others," "not reading books or seeing movies about Vietnam," in other words not doing anything that would bring back the "memories." I know from my experiences when I was doing research on head nurses at the Veterans Administration Hospital that some veterans still have nightmares and "flashbacks" and some turned to drugs and alcohol to blot it all out.

Memo 24

June 13, 2006

More About the War as a Maturation Process: The Changed Self

When I think about the impact of the war on me it was a positive one. It seems strange to say that war can have a positive impact. I met some people in Vietnam, motivated people and it kind of motivated me to go on to school. (Pause.) I would say if I had to put any kind of weight on it, it was probably more positive than negative. It was a maturational process. I probably would have matured anyway but this was kind of instant maturity.

There is no doubt that going to war makes you grow up quickly. I found that in the readings I've done about the war also. There is talk of going off to

war as a youth and returning home as an old man because of the intensity of the experience. The reality of being in a war zone certainly dispels any romantic images that one might have upon going to war. Knowing that someone will kill you if given the opportunity, as our participant says early in the interview, and seeing the wounded and dead make you grow up fast. I am still intrigued by the fact that this participant says that the war had a positive impact on him, more positive than negative. I can only think that it was perceived positively because he never had to be in a battle and his time was spent caring for the sick and wounded, in other words doing something positive.

Memo 25

June 13, 2006

The Evolving Meaning of War

I was still angry when I got out of the military. This was 1967 and the peace movement was big. I was in college and I would get angry with the student marchers, groups, and stuff like that. There were still soldiers over there and I know that it hurt them to watch that, to see the news and all of that. Now looking back as I said before I admire the marchers. At the time I was seeing them from my viewpoint, a patriot and they were seeing the war from their viewpoint, "this is all wrong." So looking back now I admire those people who at the time had more insight into that situation than I did at the time. It was wrong.

I certainly understand his anger at the peace marchers. He had just returned home and the experience of Vietnam with its wounded and dead was fresh in his mind. He could relate to all the men who were still in Vietnam and whose lives were on the line while these guys protested from the safety of their own country. Again this quote shows the evolution of his thinking about war with time. It is quite a turn around in his thinking.

Methodological Note

In reading the remainder of the interview, I find that much of it expands upon concepts that we've already identified. There is no point in continuing this coding demonstration on the same interview. But just to let our readers know, I will continue to code the remainder of the interview in the same manner as demonstrated here. I'll build upon concepts already delineated and look for further concepts.

But before closing off, there are two additional areas that I would like to write memos about.

Memo 26

June 13, 2006

Breaking Through the Wall of Silence

Our respondent didn't talk to his partner or his brothers about the war experience but he did check the obituaries to see if anyone he knew was on the list. So despite his efforts to maintain that wall of silence, to keep his thoughts about the war pushed back into the recesses of his mind, it must have crept through at some level because he read the obituaries. He still had a tie to Vietnam through the men he served with.

Memo 27

June 13, 2006

Having a Future Orientation: Strategies for Surviving

Our respondent talks little in this interview about survival, most likely because he was not a combatant. However he did have some strategies, which in a way he credits with helping him to escape the horrors of the situation and to survive. About this he says, "I think that this futuristic orientation kind of helps you separate from the reality of the situation that you're in. I thought more about the future than the present."

And then he goes on to say:

I think anyone that did not deal with anything beyond that day . . . I just think that they would have more difficult dealing with that . . . I could see . . . And probably by formulating my plans about the future also subconsciously did tell me that I had a future, that I was not going to die, that I was going to get out.

Memo 28

June 13, 2006

Trying to Find Meaning and Recognition: Going to the Memorial

It seems to me that by going to the war memorial and in doing this interview, our participant was trying even after these many years to find some meaning in the war and his and others' experiences there. He went to the war memorial partly out of curiosity but more than that he wanted to find some meaning

in a war that caused more than 58,000 American deaths and many more Vietnamese deaths. When he got there he wanted some recognition, he wanted to find a band, or some indication that people cared then and now. He wanted to find the recognition that was not there when he first returned from war. Reading the interview, I am not sure that he found what he was looking for by going to the memorial. In fact, I suspect that he just buried his emotions again and probably left feeling an even greater sense of loss.

Methodological Note

By now, our readers have a good idea of how we go about our beginning analysis. It consists of brainstorming about the data in order to identify meaning, then conceptualizing that meaning by assigning concepts to stand for what is being expressed. Concepts and, most important, categories/themes that are designated are considered provisional at this point. Concepts will be scrutinized against further data and added to, modified, or discarded as the products of analysis accumulate. The following memos were derived from the memos above and summarize and synthesize our thinking to this point.

Memo 29

June 14, 2006

Impressions of Interview

After several days of working with this interview and thinking about it, I am struck by the underlying ambivalence that I feel runs through it. I still see a lot of anger and buried feelings about the war. It is difficult to explain but I'll try. I feel that so much is being covered up, perhaps not intentionally but glossed over, sugar coated. It isn't that he doesn't say things, he does. But it is the way that he responds to things like "bodies stacked like cords of wood" in Cu Chi. Everything is explained away as "this is war" and things like this are to "be expected." The interview is almost like the way the most recent war in Iraq was covered by television reporters. It was sanitized. We never saw the blood, the sweat, or the fear. Our participant worked in a field hospital and flew missions in helicopters to pick up the injured. He must have seen terrible things, soldiers with limbs torn off, their guts exposed, and body bags by the dozen. He must have come into contact with soldiers who went crazy from the fear and constant stress. He doesn't talk about this. It's the emotion that is missing, the feeling. He does say that being in Vietnam changed his feelings about things, that he was "hardened" by the experience. But the raw emotions provoked by the

war are sealed off in some deep dark place. Underlying his story, one senses the anger and the guilt. There is anger at government for bringing men to Vietnam and then not fully supporting them by declaring it as a "war." There is anger at it being a futile "war that solved nothing." There is anger with the peace marcher for saying that the war was wrong because he had to reconcile that men still there were giving their lives for what some considered a "wrong war." There is anger at himself for believing in his country and for allowing himself to be what he perceives as "deluded." And there is guilt and anger for not being more compassionate or caring of the "enemy" who also was human and hurting. His trip to the Vietnam War Memorial is touching and very revealing. He wanted recognition for those who had given their lives. He wanted a band, a crowd to be there, someone to say that the war was worthwhile. But he stood there alone. It is interesting he went to the memorial looking for the name of the brother of his friend, then walked away burying any emotion, not wanting to return again. As he says later in the interview, the government never really declared Vietnam a war. This is what makes interviews done after the fact so interesting. We get that "looking back perspective." We see war through the different lenses of then and now. We also see that even after all these years it is difficult to penetrate that wall of silence.

Memo 30

June 14, 2006

Summary Memo of Themes/Categories

In this interview I see several themes/categories evolving. By this, I mean threads or ideas that run throughout this interview. These have already been identified as concepts, but at this time they will be elevated to the status of category/theme not only because they seem to run throughout the entire interview but also because they seem to be able to pull together some of the lesser concepts.

1. The first theme/category is the "culture of war." By that I mean that war has a culture all its own, a culture where things happen that often come into "conflict" with "civilian" norms and standards of behavior. These conflicts are experienced as "nips at conscience" or better still as "inconsistencies." In addition, the culture of war is a surreal one, taking place in a country so foreign to one's own. There is an "enemy," who if given a chance will kill or capture you. It is a culture of rules set up and enforced by the military machine that fights wars, a machine that each soldier must obey—going where they tell him or her, when they tell him or her, and doing what they tell him or her to do. If they tell you to go into the jungle to battle with the enemy you have to

do it even if you're frightened. It is a culture of battles, death and destruction, and sometimes overpowering fear calling for psychological and physical survival strategies. It is a culture that just by the very act of taking responsibility and surviving accelerates the maturational process. Under this heading I would put concepts such as "the enemy," "zones of conflict" and "safer zones," "military systems," "combatants" and "noncombatants," and "psychological and physical survival strategies."

There is also the theme/category that at this point I will call "the changing self." I don't quite know what to do with this category at this time, but it seems to have to do with a gradual change in the self by undergoing the war experience. There is a patriotic, gung ho individual starting out, many of the men very young and through the experiences that take place during that year or more in Vietnam, the person is transformed sometimes for better as in the case of our participant and sometimes for worse. For our respondent, the Vietnam experience was a maturational process. It helped him to recognize who he was and to set up plans for the future. Other soldiers might be affected very differently and that remains to be seen in future data. Our respondent grew up quickly knowing that someone "out there" wanted to kill him. I think under this theme would come concepts such as "path to the war," "self-locating," "war as a stepping stone," "experiences during the war" and "experiences immediately after the war" such as "getting on with life."

The third theme has to do with the "evolving meaning of war." Many of the young men, just as our respondent did, entered the war full of enthusiasm and with romantic notions of war. In the end they were disillusioned by the futility of this war. "Nothing changed, nothing was accomplished." Under this heading I would put concepts such as "volunteering," the "peace movement," and the "wall of silence." I find silence throughout this interview. Ex-soldiers don't want to talk about this experience. They don't go to see movies or read books about the war. Among the reasons presented in the literature for this wall of silence are the nature of the experience itself, that is, the viciousness of some of the battles and tenacity of the enemy, and the despondency of seeing so many dead and wounded bodies, especially when those bodies were of comrades. Added to this experience, as Isaacs (1997) makes it clear that there was the lack of recognition of their sacrifice and effort when soldiers returned home. There were no bands, no parades for them as in other wars. In fact, soldiers were often blamed for the war and the destruction that occurred there. Also, some soldiers like our respondent, felt that the government never really committed itself to the war. They sent men off to fight without a clear purpose other than some vague ideological reasons of a fight against communism then didn't adequately support them once they got there. They didn't understand why the enemy were fighting and underestimated them as a fighting force.

Memo 31

June 14, 2006

Questions and Directions for Theoretical Sampling

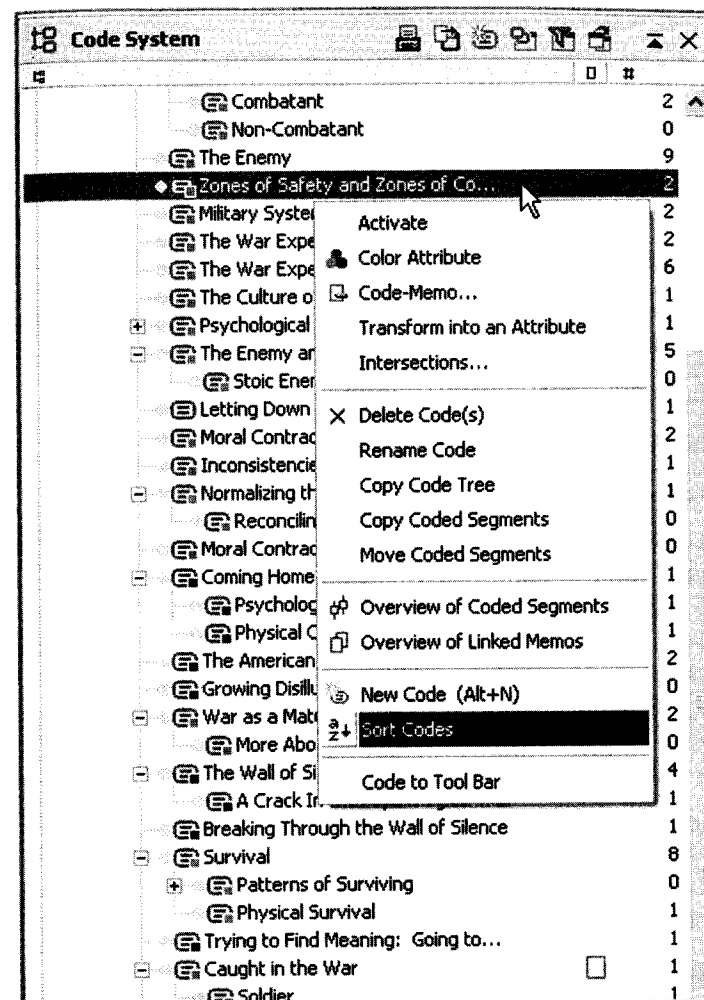
Coding this interview has left me with a series of questions that will be used to guide theoretical sampling or further data collection. This participant was in the army and a "noncombatant." After all the analysis that went on in relationship to this interview, I am left with one very important, and I think most relevant, question. That question is, what was being in a war like from the perspective of combatants?

Methodological Note

From a methodological standpoint, the question raised above is the most important thing to come out of the analysis to this point. It is the question that will direct the next data gathering. Analysis began with an interview that provided the concepts of "combatant" and "noncombatant." The interview was with a noncombatant. What came out of the analysis is that this man's experience with the war was certainly very different in many ways from what I would expect in the sense that he said it was "not such a bad experience." It is the description or dimensionalizing of the experience as "not so bad" that led me to the question, well then, what would that experience look like for a combatant. Would he describe it in the same or a different way? This is how theoretical sampling comes about. The concept of "the experience" is dimensionalized, in this case as "not so bad." My intuition tells me that the reason he thinks it was not so bad is because he was not in the front lines actually fighting the war (a kind of hypothesis to be verified or disapproved through further data collection). This hypothesis led me to gather my next set of data from combatant(s) (theoretically sampling) in order to determine if "combatants" describe their experience the same or differently from "noncombatants." In doing so, I am not only extending my understanding of the "war experience," I am also looking at how the concepts "combatant," "noncombatant," and "war experience" relate to each other.

List of Concepts/Codes

At this point I have a list of concepts/codes and perhaps some suggestion as to categories/themes. I'll list these now so that I can keep them in mind as I proceed with analysis of the next interview.



Screenshot 9

Here you see how the codes in MAXQDA can be managed. You may arrange them in a hierarchical order. They are organized similarly to Windows Explorer—you see if a code is a subcode by the little + in front of a code. All codes can be moved around by dragging and dropping. The little rectangle in the code icon indicates the code color you have chosen. All code stripes will be displayed in this color and the colors are also used for the visual functions like the TextPortrait, the CodeStream, and others. The color choice is completely up to the researcher and can be chosen out of a range of several hundred colors. The numbers on the right side of each code indicate how many text segments have been currently assigned to the code. Right mouse clicking on any of the codes will bring up the context menu. So, you can easily see which options you have to manage your Code System.

1. Locating the Self: At Time of Entry
2. Volunteering Versus Being Drafted Versus Draft Dodging
3. Being a Noncombatant Versus Being a Combatant
4. The Enemy
5. Zones of Safety and Zones of Conflict or Killing Zones
6. Military Systems
7. The War Experience and Strategies for Blocking Out or Minimizing Inconsistencies
8. The War Experience
9. The Culture of War and Its Inconsistencies
10. Psychological Survival Strategies
11. The Enemy and Psychological Survival Strategies (An axial coding memo)
12. Letting Down the Emotional Guard
13. Moral Contradictions of War and Psychological Survival Strategies (An axial coding memo)
14. Inconsistencies Within the Military System
15. Normalizing the Situation: Another Survival Strategy
16. Moral Contradictions
17. Coming Home and Getting on With Life
18. The American Failure: War Hostile Environment
19. Growing Disillusionment: A New Meaning of War
20. War as a Maturational Stepping Stone: The Changing Self (An axial coding memo)
21. The Wall of Silence
22. Breaking Through the Wall of Silence
23. Survival
24. Trying to Find Meaning: Going to the War Memorial

Methodological Note

The purpose for listing these concepts here is to provide readers with a memory refresher as we move into the next chapter. If the researcher is using

a computer program, the concepts or list of codes are readily available. But remember, just listing concepts is not what we are about. It is the thought that goes into those concepts and their development in terms of properties and dimensions that is important. Those properties and dimensions are not always spelled out in our memos but they are there in our words.

Summary of Important Points

This chapter demonstrates early coding. The researcher began by breaking the data down into manageable pieces, reflecting upon that data in memos, and conceptualizing what she thought the data were indicating. To arrive at an understanding of what the data were stating, there was a lot of brainstorming going on with questions asked about the data, comparisons made, and a lot of reflective thought. Some of the memos expanded upon the concepts by including some of the details or subconcepts contained in the piece of data. There was some attempt to do some beginning axial coding, or relating minor concepts to broader level concepts such as "locating the self" at time of entry and listing subconcepts under it. Also, a couple of possible themes or categories were delineated, though at this point the categories remain unverified and undeveloped. Almost of all the analysis in this chapter provided direction for the next set of data collection. Directing the next data collection is the question of how does being either a "combatant" or a "non-combatant" influence the "war experience"? In the next chapter, I will pick up with the analysis where I left off, building upon previous analysis using the next data set.

Activities for Thinking, Writing, and Group Discussion

1. Sit down and think about what the researcher did analytically in this chapter.
2. Write a detailed memo about the analytic process and what you learned from it. If you do this using MAXQDA, think about a meaningful symbol for your memo. Make use of the possibility to link codes to your memos, if your memos relate to any existing codes.
3. Discuss your memo with the group, pointing out what you learned from the above demonstration.
4. As a group, take a piece of data, an interview, or an observation provided by one of the group members or the instructor and go to work analyzing it. Come up with some concepts and write memos that explain and expand

upon those concepts. If you are working with MAXQDA, decide on using an "individual" color for each person of the group, then put aside all other code colors. When finished coding, switch all colors on and compare the coding done by the different members of your group. Discuss the differences of the coding.

Note

1. The pronoun I, rather than we, will be used in the following five chapters because the analysis was done by Corbin, who takes full responsibility for it.

9

Elaborating the Analysis

On the part of the researcher, creative and solid data analysis requires astute questioning, a relentless search for answers, active observation, and accurate recall. It is a process of fitting data together, of making the invisible obvious, of linking and attributing consequences to antecedents. It is a process of conjecture and verification, of correction and modification, of suggestion and defense. (Morse & Field, 1995, pp. 125–126)

Table 9.1 Definition of Terms

Axial Coding: Crosscutting or relating concepts to each other. Though this is not specifically addressed in this chapter, note that when two concepts are discussed in the same memo I am using what was called in previous editions of this book axial coding.

Comparative Analysis: Comparing incident against incident for similarities and differences. Incidents that are found to be conceptually similar to previously coded incidents are given the same conceptual label and put under the same code. Each new incident that is coded under a code adds to the general properties and dimensions of that code, elaborating it and bringing in variation.

Conceptual Saturation: The process of acquiring sufficient data to develop each category/theme fully in terms of its properties and dimensions and to account for variation.

Open Coding: Breaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data. At the same time, one is qualifying those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions.

Theoretical Sampling: Data collection based on concepts that appear to be relevant to the evolving story line.